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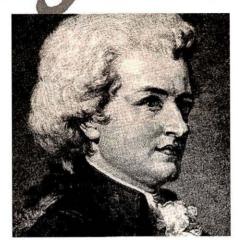
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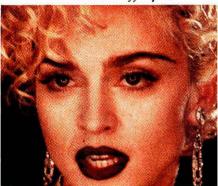
VOLUME VII, NUMBER 1

CD Review

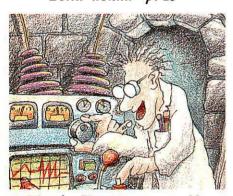
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THE FIRST WORD

R.I.P.: The Green Ink Myth

BY LARRY CANALE

ike Willie Mays' 22-year playing career, any daytime soap opera, and a messy divorce, the green ink debate has lingered too long. But let's go over the bottom line one more time: Coloring your compact discs with green, blue, aqua, or mauve Magic Markers is not going to change the way they sound.

We originally reported on the green ink "discovery" in our April issue. Oregon retailer Dave Herren claimed that coating the horizontal edge of a CD would enhance its sound so drastically that it would take roughly \$2000 in stereo equipment for a similar upgrade. The syndicated columnist who broke the story told us that green ink eliminated "harshness often associated with digital software." He also quoted Craig Dory, an engineer and president of Dorian Records, as saying he heard a difference with one of his label's discs after greening the edge.

But when we spoke with Dory, he wasn't nearly as zealous as the writer painted him. "There have been a lot of claims made without any scientific evidence," he said, "and frankly, I find

them stomach-churning.

That's precisely our feeling. New York Times writer Hans Fantel recently echoed those sentiments, wryly recalling a line from Alice in Wonderland. "It only takes a little practice to believe impossible things," he wrote. "That's what the Queen told Alice in Wonderland. 'Why, sometimes,' she said, 'I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.''' Fantel went on to say that coloring the edges of your CDs "is no harmless superstition. It may damage discs and conceivably cause the loss of one's entire collection."

Most publications that wasted any space at all on this absurd "phenomenon" urged consumers to keep green ink away from their CDs. Of course, there were exceptions. In the July 16 issue of New York, film critic David "The Ear" Denby blithely recommended every home-brew CD tweak ever concocted, writing that improvements may not be measurable but are still obvious to "every music lover I know." (Wow! With evidence like that...)

Predictably, this yo-yo even endorsed Armor All for enhancing CDs, never mind for beautifying your car's dashboard. That whole fairy tale, you'll remember, preceded-and, in terms of stupidity, exceeded—the green ink myth. Before too many people rushed to the car care sections of local stores, wiser heads prevailed and brought to light the truth: There aren't many worse things you could do to a CD than rub Armor All into the surface. (The laser beam actually can decompose the Armor All, which in turn could coat the laser's lens, rendering both that mechanism and the player itself defective.)

It's lunatic fringe audiophiles who are misleading consumers. We still get letters from readers who are amazed about the knockout quality

of their newly greened CDs. "I couldn't believe it when you said [green ink] doesn't make a difference," wrote one of them. "I have greened almost all of my 700 CDs and on 95 percent of them I have heard a definite sonic difference.... Don't ask me how it works; I don't know. [But] in most cases it takes away hiss and distortion."

Sorry, tweaks, but green ink is actually "a great way to ruin the protective coating on your CDs," according to Scott Bartlett, vice-president of sales and marketing at Digital Audio Disc Corp., the largest CD manufacturer in the U.S. "If you put anything on [your CD] and it destroys the protective coating, it has the same effect as putting a hole in the atmosphere-the hole grows. Now the hole may not necessarily grow [on a CD], but as the aluminum-or any metal, even gold-oxidizes, you'll get what you can call disc rot."

No one in his or her right mind should even be getting to that stage. CD-reading, after all, is a digital process. "We're dealing in a binary code, and '0s is 0s' and '1s is 1s,"' Bartlett says adamantly. "Not hard 0s, not soft 0s, not big 1s, not little 1s-just 0s and 1s. If the 0s reflect back into a microprocessor inside a CD player, they're only going to come up [as 0s].

As for people who can hear a difference, "the whole thing is in their minds," Bartlett says. "This is a mind game-or a mindless game. They're trying to transfer analog technology into digital. These same people would probably tell you they can play CDs on their turntables.

DADC, by the way, has conducted green ink tests. The results? "We couldn't get anything," Bartlett says. "It wasn't measurable. All it told us is that people's ears are different. And so are their minds."

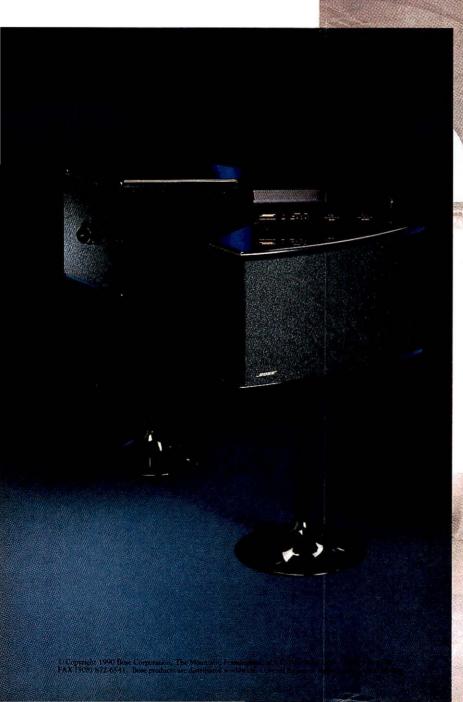
Tom Vernier, an engineer and a CDR contributing editor, dropped us this note: "If you have passed the kindergarten of digital audio with the slimmest of understanding you will know how ridiculous this kind of garbage is. Digital reproduction is all or none. Yes, there is a pit; no there is not. If 'stray' light had any effectwhich would happen only in a very poorly designed tracking servo-it would be to cause bit errors, just like a defect on the surface would. If error correction circuitry couldn't handle these bit errors, the music would blank out. Later on in the D/A chain there are many places for improvement, and many different design strategies, but this light diffraction/reflection/refraction business is nothing but uneducated hokum."

Brad Miller, executive producer for Mobile Fidelity Productions of Nevada and principal partner of By the Numbers, manufacturer of the Colossus Digital Audio Processor, is more sarcastic. "If you have any kind of common sense in regard to how digital audio works, then you'll know that most of this [green ink hoax] is crap. But if someone really believes it, I've got an idea that could make him some money. He can take

Continued on p. 110

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Hans Fantel, The New York Times, 1990

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Julian Hirsch, Stereo Review, 1968

"...it has a total sound that soars, with a brilliance that defies description." Modern Hi-Fi & Music, 1977



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CURRENT SAMPLES

Smell This Disc

After the success of such aromatic endeavors as Madonna's patchouliscented albums and the Raspberries' fruity-fragranced first LP, along comes the Swamp Zombies' Scratch and Sniff Car Crash (Doctor Dream Records DDCD 9034). The scratch patch on the liner notes—redolent of smoke, grease, and burning rubber—can help you relive the olfactory experience of an au-

tomobile accident. Why would a band who plays high energy acoustic music that wildly embraces elements of punk, folk, and rock use such a stinking gimmick? After two members were



separately involved in auto wrecks recently, the Swamp Zombies felt that the world was ready for a heady "musiconasal" experience with definite impact.

—Edward Murray



Resurrecting Rhino Vinyl

As nostalgic promotional bait for what might otherwise be overlooked CD releases, Rhino resurrected 10-inch records and sent us searching for dusty turntables that would play 78s. Drawn from the vaults of Roulette Records, Rhino's reissue series features the big hits, unreleased tracks, photos, extensive liner notes, and other rarities from such '50s and '60s groups as the Cleftones, the Chantels, the Flamingos, and the Heartbeats. These best-of-the-doo-wop-era reissues are now available in digital sound, with many tracks in true stereo for the first time. Welcome back to sock hops and the innocent days of yesteryear!

—Mary-Kate Bourn

Poetry in Motion



After all the negative press spawned by 2 Live Crew and "explicit lyrics" stickered albums, we draw your attention to the positive side of rap. The title track to the We're All in the Same Gang compilation (Warner Bros. 26241-2) begins this way: "I'm King News and I come to you with the truth. The mean streets took six more lives overnight, all the result of gang-bang stupidity." What follows

are stanzas by 13 different rap artists—such as Def Jef, Tone Loc, Ice-T, Young M.C., and Digital Underground—decrying street violence.

Another approach comes from Michael Peace, who rhymes words of black pride, heritage, and religion. The Christian rapper travels to inner-city ghettos, prisons, and detention centers around the country to act as a catalyst of hope. If you haven't heard him on a street corner near you, try his latest release, *Loud N Clear*, on Reunion Records (7010058725).

_Robin Chalmers

e wiedlin tangled

Tenor Triumvirate

Even most optimists never thought it would happen. But last July, the world's three most famous tenors joined hands and voices in Rome, Italy, for a concert, ostensibly in celebration of the World Cup soccer championships. Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, and Jose Carreras (pictured left to right) are all avid soccer fans, which prompted an ingenious promoter to invite the three superstars to perform together following the semi-finals. The program-with Zubin Mehta

conducting—consists of arias, popular Italian songs, and a medley from West Side Story.



London Records plans to release the concert on CD and laserdisc this month. —David Vernier

GROUP GROPE

Our resourceful staff sniffs out a new release, assigning ratings—as is our custom—for performance and sound quality.

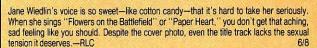
> JANE WIEDLIN TANGLED

EMI CDP 90741 (AAD, 45:49, 1990)

AVERAGE RATING

7/7

PERFORMANCE SOUND QUALITY



Sorry, folks, I'm a sucker for post-Bangles cute-girl hooks-a-plenty music. But Jane, here's some advice: Dump the producer.—DV 8/5

Anyone who's ever read any review I've ever written knows why I hate this disc.-EM 4/8

I can't tell you when I've enjoyed an album more. Great songs and enticing performances—an all-around fun CD. Way to go-go, Jane!—LW 9/7

The liner notes are impossible to read, and the cover art is—shall I say—just a bit tasteless. Wiedlin's Lauperish voice grows on you like a rash, in a mossy sort of way—it won't go-go away! Still, I won't buy this one.—MKB

If your guilty pleasures of the '80s included Cyndi Lauper, the Bangles, and certain GoGo's songs, then Jane Wiedlin—with her Lauperian voice, Banglian harmonies, and GoGo's production remnants—may do the trick in the '90s. *Tangled* isn't filling, it's not forceful, and it's not the future. But it ain't exactly fungus, either. It's, well, *fun.*—LC 7/8





CURRENT SAMPLES

Schoenberg Spectacular

Some good things come in large-very largepackages. That was proved recently at the acoustically marvelous Alte Oper (Old Opera House) in Frankfurt, West Germany, when internationally renowned conductor Eliahu Inbal assembled 400 choristers and orchestra musicians for a rare-and monumental-performance of Arnold Schoenberg's Gurrelieder. The event was a farewell extravaganza in honor of Inbal's 16 years of service to the Frankfurt orchestra. Denon, a longtime partner (with Hessian Radio) in many recording projects with Inbal in Frankfurt, recorded the performance, which will likely be released sometime next year.

At a press conference following the concert, Inbal expressed a desire (echoed by Denon's engineers) to someday see the return of four-channel—or even eight-channel-sound for home listening. "More playback channels are necessary to accurately reproduce the sound of the concert hall," he insisted. The technology is possible with CD, and, indeed, Denon



has been encoding Inbal's recordings with information necessary to someday realize the conductor's

Inbal's plans now take him to Vienna, where he continues a Shostakovich symphony cycle with the Vienna Symphony, also to appear on Denon.

-David Vernier

In All His Naked Splendor

Ever the underdog for good causes, pop star Sting has championed the environmental issues confronting wasteful 6 x 12 longbox packaging. His next A&M release (still in the works) will appear in public naked-a jewel box without cardboard or plastic clothing. Considering Sting's money-making clout,

we'll bet the farm that even retailers who insist they need longboxes to sell CDs will find a way to prominently display this potential profit-maker. Like all great movements in history, it looks like the winds of change (in this case, phasing out useless longboxes) will once again originate with the artist.





Pop/Rock

SEPTEMBER 1990 LAST MONTH

- 3 Billy Idol: Charmed Life (Chrysalis)
- 1 Lisa Stansfield: Affection (Arista) 2
- 5 Madonna: I'm Breathless (Sire) 3
- 2 Sinead O'Connor: I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got (Chrysalis)
- Wilson Phillips: Wilson Phillips (SBK)
- 4 Bonnie Raitt: Nick of Time (Capitol)
- Mariah Carey: Mariah Carey (CBS)
- Bruce Hornsby & the Range: A Night on the Town (RCA)
- 6 Alannah Myles: Alannah Myles (Atlantic)
- M.C. Hammer: Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em (Capitol)

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SEPTEMBER 1990 LAST MONTH

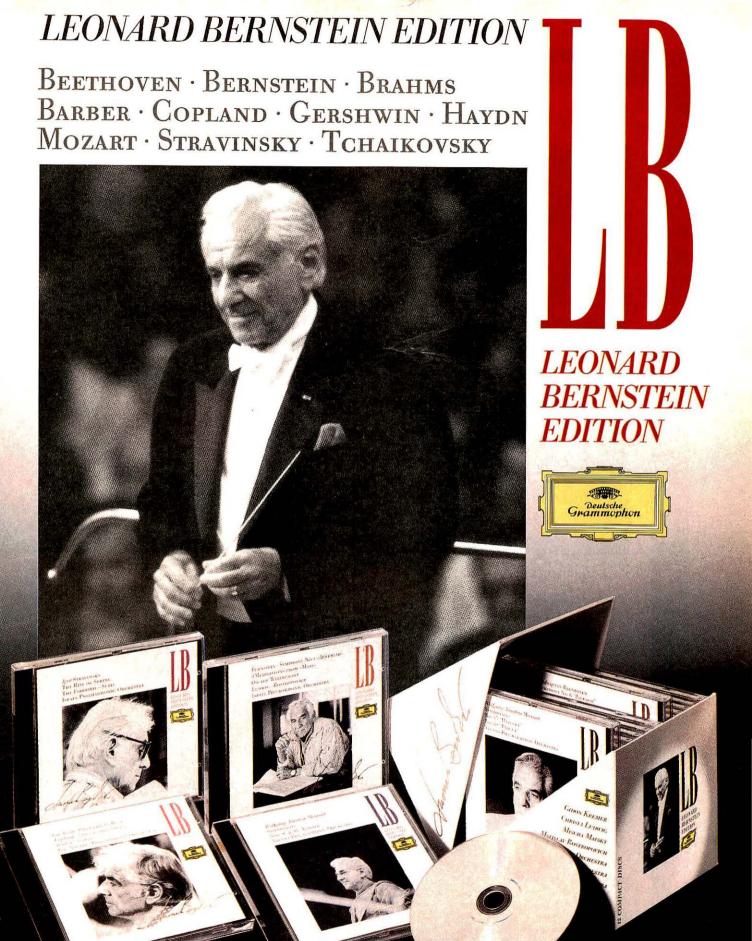
- 1 Harper Brothers: Remembrance (Verve/PolyGram)
- 3 Marcus Roberts: Deep in the Shed (Novus/RCA)
- 5 Najee: Tokyo Blue (EMI)
- John Scofield: Time on My Hands (Blue Note)
- 2 Basia: London Warsaw New York (CBS)
- 6 10 Stanley Jordan: Cornucopia (Blue Note)
- 9 Jack DeJohnette: Parallel Realities (MCA)
- 4 Dianne Reeves: Never Too Far (EMI)
- Wynton Marsalis: Standard Time
 - Vol. 3—Resolution of Romance (CBS)
- 10 Lee Ritenour: Stolen Moments (GRP)

Classical

SEPTEMBER 1990

LAST MONTH

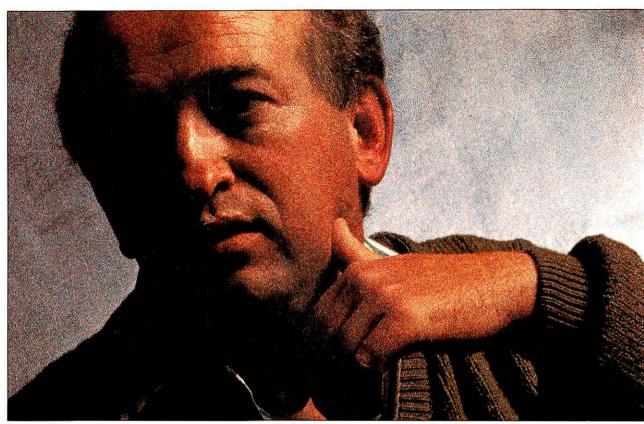
- Vladimir Horowitz: Last Recording (Sony Classical)
- 2 Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 (Ode to Freedom)/Leonard Bernstein 2 (Deutsche Grammophon)
- 5 Handel: Arias/Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Neville Marriner, Kathleen Battle (Angel)
- Bartok: Quartets Nos. 1-6/Emerson String Quartet (Deutsche Grammophon)
- 5 5 Henry V/Motion Picture Soundtrack/City of Birmingham Symphony, Simon Rattle (Angel)
- 6 Early Romantic Overtures/London Classical Players, Roger Norrington (Angel) 6
- Tchaikovsky: Arias/Verdi: Arias/Rotterdam Philharmonic, Valery Gergiev, Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Philips)
- 8 10 Music of the Night/Boston Pops, John Williams (Sony Classical)
- Vivaldi: Concertos for Cello/Toronto Chamber Orchestra, Paul Robinson, Ofra Harnoy 9 3
- 9 Brahms: Concerto in D Major for Violin/Bruch: Concerto No. 1 for Violin/ Minnesota Symphony, Edo de Waart, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (Angel)



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certo the way it was originally conceived, new, ornamented solos had to be written.

O'Conor wrote them in the style of Mozart, studying operas like Don Giovanni and The Marriage of Figaro to get a feeling for how the composer created a solo voice in his works.

To further the accuracy of the recording, O'Conor worked with master engineer and chairman of Telarc International, Jack Renner. Renner has, in the words of O'Conor, "a higher level of hearing than the rest of us."

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The Bluebird of Happiness

BY TOM KREHBIEL

CA Records and jazz share a special relationship. It dates back to 1917, when RCA Victor made its first recording of this new music with the Original Dixieland Jass Band. Important early efforts by the likes of Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington soon followed.

RCA Victor and its budget-priced sibling, Bluebird, held a veritable stranglehold in the swing era. The two labels served up prodigious quantities of big band hits by Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Artie

Shaw, and Charlie Barnet. This heavy regimen was leavened by a seemingly infinite stream of small band romps by Fats Waller. And, much to its credit, Victor didn't turn its back on the early stirrings of bebop the way most other major record companies did.

The archives developed by Victor during its first three decades stand as a remarkable monument to jazz recording and performance. So when an opportunity came to visit the vaults at the label's New York City head-quarters, I jumped at the chance. Making the pilgrimage also meant getting to discuss the theory and practice of jazz reissue production with Steve Backer, executive producer for the recently revived RCA/Bluebird label.

The new Bluebird specializes in reissues of jazz from Victor's catalogs—not only the swing era classics from the original recordings, but also much earlier and later jazz performances culled from what Backer calls "these incredibly fertile vaults."

Fertile, indeed. But those vaults have gathered dust for much of their

existence. RCA's reissue programs have been sporadic, and when the label has been active in releasing older material, it concentrated heavily on the halcyon years (1930s and 1940s) of the big swing bands. There was also a tendency to attempt presentations of "complete" collections of various artists' RCA performances—a policy that appeals to specialist collectors rather than typical fans.

Backer recognized that RCA needed a reissue program based on a general opening up of the archives. The vaults had "material of major significance—material vital to the history of jazz—that wasn't being dealt with. I wanted to broaden the spectrum to reach new people. I did not want to continue in the collectors point of view.

"We're now dealing with great artists who are the backbone and heritage of this

company—from Jelly Roll Morton to Sidney Bechet to Duke Ellington to Louis Armstrong. That's so much more significant to me than the narrow spectrum swing bands from the '30s and '40s.''

When Backer came to RCA, he not only had to change course, but he had to catch up with companies that had started their reissue programs moving a few years earlier.

Getting music out of the vaults and into listeners' CD players is a complex task. When Backer and his team of discographer/producers sit down to plan their strategy, they think in terms of release packages of six

RCA

to eight titles, not just of individual albums. These come out about four times a year. But at the start, Backer points out, they had to "fill the pipeline," so they packaged 15 or so titles in each quarterly wave.

However many titles there are in a set, the goal is to have them cornplement each other. "We try to program a balanced release," Backer says. "We include artists who are bigger names, some concept packages, and lesser-named artists who might be aesthetically viable but not as commercially viable. So in a release where you might find Ellington and Armstrong, you might also find Freddie Green or Jimmy Rushing."

Once the package is laid out, it's time to get the actual recorded performances. Since much of RCA's most valuable material is from the pre-tape era, that means finding 78 rpm metal masters.

"The main source of our metal is the RCA vaults in Indianapolis. We requisition it, and most of it usually comes. But sometimes it doesn't, or the original metal is unusable. In those cases, we may look for copies in the hands of individual collectors, or we may find tape transfers that were done in the '50s. The original sources were nearly 40 years younger at that time, so we might have better raw material on tape."

Once acceptable analog sources are at hand, they are transferred to Sony 1630 digital tape. These are direct digital copies with no equalization or other adjustments. The

producer working on a particular title sends the digital copy to Sonic Solutions in California for treating with the NoNoise process.

"The CD exacerbates the negative as well as the positive," Backer notes. "If things are clicking and popping and there's surface noise everywhere, the CD medium is going to reveal those problems more than tape or LP will."

The processing by Sonic Solutions is the critical technical step in the reissue process. And although the No-Noise process is, at its core, a data processing algorithm, Backer and his team never lose sight of the fact that the data represents music. Listening evaluations take place before, during, and after the processing.

"It's important to note that it's a team effort," Backer stresses. "There's continual communication between our engineer, our producer, and Sonic Solutions. With a lot of our older material, our producer/engineer team is Orrin Keepnews and Paul Goodman. They go to California, sit down with the people from Sonic,

and they explain, 'Well, this might be a little off,' or 'This should should be this way or that way.' They all work together.''

Once everything seems okay in California, the processed tapes come back to New York, where they get yet another review by the producer and engineer. Sometimes a bit of digital equalization is added at this final evaluation.

As Backer describes his objectives for all this technical work, you get a mental picture of a person walking a sonic tightrope. "The idea is to project the original's sound in a way that's palatable to today's ears. We don't want to alter the music because of the older jazz listener who might remember the originals, but we're not just going after the collectors from the '40s and '50s. We're also trying to attract a younger audience—one that is attuned to listening to music recorded

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JAZZ TRACKS

in the '80s and now the '90s."

In this imperfect world, the best work of Backer, his RCA team, and the Sonic Solutions engineers may not result in ideal sound. Glenn Miller's *The Popular Recordings* (1938–42) (9785-2-RB) hit the street without NoNoise processing. I had listened to a copy before talking with Backer and the sonics were aggressively regressive. What happened?

happened?
"We did do it with No-Noise," Backer explains, "but when it came back from Sonic, we were unhappy with the sound. It felt compressed. For the first time, it seemed that the high end was affected. That was really very disappointing to me because I had a release schedule to meet. We all knew that something was wrong but there wasn't any time to reprocess. So we pulled off the NoNoise treatment, and tried to clean up the masters as well as possible here in the studios with the engineer and the producer working very hard to make the deadline."

Fats Waller's The Last Years (1940–43) (9883-2-RB), which met the same deadline, came through the NoNoise process with demi-semi-quavers a-flying. "You can hear the difference," Backer notes. "If we didn't have Sonic Solutions, everything—not just the Waller set—would sound like the Glenn Miller album. The overall difference is considerable, and that's why we use NoNoise."

Backer hopes that the opportunity to do the Glenn Miller set over might come along. This is not idle talk, He has done that before.

"I went back and re-did the entire *Duke Ellington: The Blanton-Webster Band*. The first investment in that was over \$40,000, but there were mistakes and problems with the result. Endings were cut off, beginnings were cut off, and entire wrong takes were used. I scrapped the whole thing and invested another \$40,000 to \$45,000 in doing the project over."

Newer recordings present a different set of challenges. First there's the question of whether to reproduce an original album intact or combine selected performances with others from different original packages. Backer often opts for the latter practice.

"There weren't that many classic albums at RCA in the '50s and '60s," he observes. "We don't have a *Kind of Blue* or a *Time Out*. We listen to our complete albums to see if the material holds up as a unit. If it doesn't, we use additional material. Each case is very different."

On the technical side, there's the choice of remixing the multitrack masters. "Most of the time we use the original mixed-down versions of the tapes," Backer says. "An exception was with the Gil Evans reissues. We went back because he wanted to remix. After a 10- or 15-year reflection, he had a different point of view. But in most cases we're not going to do that. You don't want to alter most people's perceptions. You don't want to change the music."

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adonna is not an easy interview. She can be abrupt, moody, and petulant. She does whatever she wants, whenever she wants, and couldn't care less who thinks what about it. CD Review had to chase her across the country, catching her on both coasts, during a series of shows in Los Angeles and Worcester, MA. But she finally talked, and when she did, she made plenty of sense. Even if she stormed away when the topic was not to her liking.

But beyond the spoiled brat persona she loves to project is a misunderstood superstar with limitless potential. Her versatility is unchallenged in today's pop music world. Her unpredictability is equally unparalleled.

Witness last summer's Blond Ambition tour, which sometimes grew campier than an X-rated Las Vegas revue, while at other times it was as musically explosive and powerful as Michael Jackson belting out "Beat It" or "Billie Jean."

The woman has recently made an album, I'm Breathless (Sire 26209-2), which not coincidentally coincides with the release of the movie Dick Tracy, where she plays Breathless Mahoney, opposite Warren Beatty's title role. The album is a tight-knit collection of songs that captures the gangster aura of the '30s, plus one misfit, "Vogue." The latter is a song that, unless you've lived in a cave for the past six months, you've surely heard—and probably danced to—hundreds of times.

Her decision to include "Vogue" was easy, she says. "It's a great song, with nifty dance steps, and people wanted to hear it."

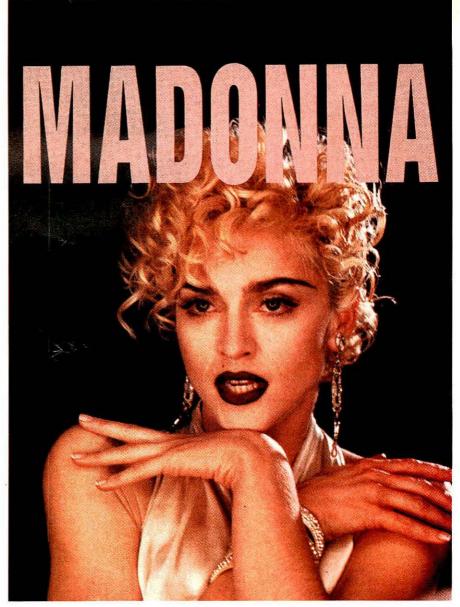
Obviously, she has a way of simplifying things beyond belief one moment—and complicating them beyond belief the next. But there's no denying that on *I'm Breathless*, the versatile Madonna again has overstepped musical boundaries.

"I get bored easy with people, with music, with life," she says, just before an L.A. soundcheck. "I'm not some puppet that can pretend she's happy when she isn't. I needed a new, totally outrageous change of pace, and this was it for me."

The amazing thing about I'm Breathless is that Madonna's magic gives the Broadway-flavored show tunes—four of which she wrote with her producing partner, Patrick Leonard, and three of which come from Stephen Sondheim—a contemporary feel and accessibility, simply because of her larger-than-life presence. Madonna emphatically leaves her stamp engraved on whatever she touches.

In this case, she adapts to an older era's sound and, with amazing ease, augments it with her own modernized signature. The music flows briskly from track to track with an ascending conception, finally concluding with the displaced yet lovable "Vogue." The compact disc's dynamic sonics give the recording an extra kick.

"The CD's quality sound really helped me out a lot on the project," she says. "I still think I sometimes come up short of some of



ALMAYS N VOGUE

BY KEVIN CONNAL

those artists who sang these show tunes in the '30s, but at least I've got the technology to make up for that in certain areas. It kind of scares me to think of how incredible they would have sounded if there were CDs around back then.

"I really love this type of music," she adds. "This is what I enjoy listening to—not all the modern crap that's out there now."

While Madonna's material itself is modern, she's been attracting a wider audience with each new release. Her average fan isn't necessarily your 13-year-old MTV freak, as classic crooner Tony Bennett will tell you. In case you missed it last month, Bennett told CD Review, "The one person today who has caught on to new contemporary music and made some sense out of it, funny enough, is

Madonna... She's coming up with instrumentation that's very, very vital—way ahead of any kind in her category. It's completely different and very exciting. You'll see in five years that everyone is going to consider her a very important person in American pop music... She's creating a new vitality in American music—a new fashion."

To those heaping accolades, Madonna grins, shakes her head, and says, "Very flattering coming from a man with such a legendary voice." So yes, there is a bit of humility in Madonna. You just have to pry and haggle to bring it to the surface.

"I learned at a young age that to be tough did not negate being sexy, sensual, or feminine," she says. "I've had to stand up for myself since I was very young. You guys [the media] write me off as being selfish, hardened, and things like that. Switch places for a moment and how would you be? I can't concern myself with people's perceptions and worry about all of that. I've got to be me. Take it or leave it. I know that I'm not a bad person no matter what people choose to believe.''

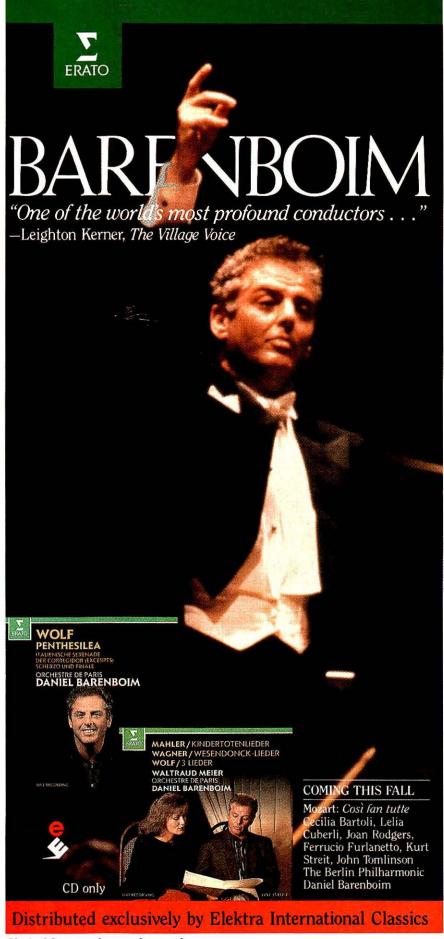
Defensiveness should come as no surprise coming from Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone. One of eight children raised in a strict Catholic household in Detroit, she suffered a great deal of heartache growing up. She was only 6 when her mother died. That was followed a decade later by what she's called a series of abusive relationships with boyfriends. Her much-publicized (what part of her life isn't?) failed marriage to the media antagonist Sean Penn further confused her.

She is prone to impromptu tantrums. Three years ago at a sold-out Sullivan Stadium show in Boston, with 60,000 people in the crowd, she locked herself in a trailer during opening act Level 42's set, crying that she didn't have any friends, and that everyone was simply out to make a fast buck or to exploit her. She pouted about not having anyone to eat dinner with, because everyone wanted a piece of something for nothing. Less than a hour later she came bouncing down an elegant glass staircase to center stage and ripped through a phenomenal two-hour-plus set that seemingly had more spirit than the American Revolution. It was one of the year's concert highlights and certainly outdid the Blond Ambition tour in the areas of musical content and modern dance, though not in props and costumes.

When questioned about the overblown theatrics of the new show, Madonna quickly snaps, "I could have gone out and done the same show as the 'Virgin' tour, but with a few set list adjustments, like most artists would have done. But I wanted the ambiguity and grandiose effect of a full-scale production. The time was right for this tour. Let the audience decide what's going on up there on stage. So far, they seem quite pleased, judging from the responses night after night."

Her penchant for controversy has grown in proportion to her increasing success. When no one else dared, Madonna blatantly proclaimed herself a "Material Girl," and with earnest conviction. Then there was "Like a Virgin," on which she poked fun at those who were, with strong implications that Madonna wasn't. And then came the shocking "Like a Prayer," with its video—set in a Catholic church—drawing loads of accusations of blasphemy and mounds of criticism for tastelessness. But does Madonna care?

"Not in the least. Because I guess there's a piece of me within all of those songs. Once again, I leave it to my audience's discretion to sort out what it is. Meanwhile, all the panic and hoopla the media creates about it—well, I find it kind of fun to sit back and take all that in."



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GET READY FOR THE HOT NEW TRENDS

BY DANIEL KUMIN



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The Kenwood LVD-300 combination laserdisc/CD unit.

or the first time in ever so long, the semi-annual toy fest for grown-ups—the Summer Consumer Electronics Show, held last June in (as always) Chicago—delivered some real news. Not just new products—as usual, these were represented in superabundance. But the first concrete evidence of new trends that promise to carry the hi-fi business (not to mention the video, video-game, calculator, watch, battery, and related endeavors) well into the next century.

Beginning with a topic still of some little interest (at least to us here at *CDR*), digital audio tape finally took its official bow—with all the fanfare and excitement of a summer afternoon's drowse in a shady hammock. It seems, with DAT's multiple false starts over the past three years, that the boy cried wolf!' just one time too many. Nevertheless, let's not lose sight of the fact that DAT *is* an exceedingly neat and useful format.

More than a few firms announced shipping dates that will put digital decks equipped with the accepted Serial Copy Management System (which permits limited digital copying) on store shelves by the time you read this—and at prices substantially below \$1000. Long-term DAT promoter (and co-

developer) Sony scooped the world by announcing that its DTC-75ES deck would reach retail dealers in quantity early in the summer, with a suggested price of only \$950. (Another \$900-suggested Sony model may sell on the "street" for as little as \$800.) Denon, JVC, and Technics all announced plans to ship their own DAT designs in the course of the summer, at prices ranging from \$1000 to \$1700. If this is where DAT pricing is starting out, it seems clear that that the days of the nifty, \$500 pocket "DAT-Man" can only be months, rather than years, away. Meanwhile, the specter of illegalizing digital tape is fast dimming. A DAT-legitimizing bill is in the U.S. congress, but it appears lost in the shuffle-for this session, at least. What's more, in the final analysis, it probably won't make a bit of difference.

As often touted in these pages, laserdiscs are the next trend to watch, with the 1990s looming as the videodisc decade—after only about 20 years' wait. To this end, Pioneer—the laser video format's putative drum major—introduced a new laserdisc price leader. The CLD-980 combination audio CD/laserdisc player, though stripped of most non-essential features, maintains high video and audio performance levels for under \$500. Meanwhile, Denon, Panasonic, and Kenwood all introduced maiden

laserdisc/CD multiplayer efforts—the latter's \$699 LVD-300 is a full-featured, audio digital-output equipped model that brings picture-enhancing digital time-base correction to a new low price level.

One of the biggest CES buzzes this year accompanied Home THX from film giant Lucasfilm Ltd. Dedicated moviegoers will know that the THX sound systems found in tonier theaters create the kind of loss-free reproduction of music, dialogue, and sound effects so vital to the full effect of such George Lucas productions as Star Wars and Indiana Jones. The THX theater sound specs, developed by Lucasfilm, set strict standards for such points as loudspeaker frequency response and dynamic range, directivity of the same, and acoustical characteristics of the theater itself.

With the irresistible growth of home-theater audio/video systems, Home THX now seeks to do the same sort of upgrade for home video movie sound. Lucasfilm itself does not make any gear. Instead, it licenses technology (standards, really) to those firms that do. The guidelines were developed by Lucasfilm technical director Tom Holman. (Holman is an apt choice for the job—his hi-fi pedigree dates back to the innovative Advent Corp. engineering crew of the mid-1970s.)



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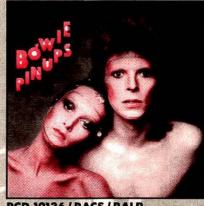
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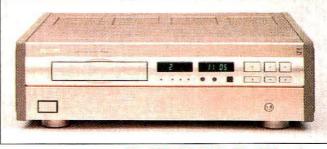


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Two initial Home THX-licensed systems were seen, from Technics and from a partnership of Snell Acoustics and Lexicon. Both consist of a Home THX-tweaked Dolby Pro Logic surround processor and seven loudspeakers: left and right, dual subwoofers, a single, center-channel, and left and right surround channel (rear) cabinets. This is decidedly high-end stuff: The Snell/Lexicon system will be approximately \$7500; the Technics set-up some \$12,000-and you still have to provide your own amps, big-screen TV, and laserdisc or videotape source. (But fear not-CDR predicts that the trickledown technology effect is already a-dripping.) Both systems were demonstrated with a laserdisc of rock-'em, sock-'em Lucasfilm highlights. The resulting impact quotient-video as well as audio-was well off the scale.

The clear trend among CD players today is multidisc changers. One of the more interesting designs among the multifarious came from a rather surprising source: Nakamichi. This high-end-oriented name debuted its new "MusicBank" line of accessibly priced hi-fi components incorporating several singular developments, notably the unusual mode of the CD Player 2 model (\$649). While this appears to be a conventional single-play CD design, it in fact works as a one-plus-six multidisc player. The

Nakamichi unit swallows as many as seven CDs by way of a familiar-looking single-disc drawer. Six discs are loaded into a permanent interior "stocker" mechanism, where they can be programmed much like a six-disc changer; a seventh disc loaded in the drawer remains playable as with a single-disc format.

The top Nakamichi MusicBank CD players also incorporate a new 20-bit Enhanced Linearity D/A converter design, which employs two 18-bit DACs per channel as well as bit shifting techniques to achieve some impressive claimed performance specs (such as 105 dB S/N ratios).

In a more orthodox vein, Denon introduced a high-value in-between CD player that brings the company's flagship technology to more affordable levels. The \$750 DCD-2560 employs Denon's proprietary Lambda 20-bit D/A conversion system in a dual-converter per channel, digital-bias configuration. The new model also introduces such advanced features as digital pitch control and an automatic peak level search routine that is one of several assists for those who tape lots

Meanwhile, top-load rotary changers continued to propagate at astonishing rates. TEAC's \$319.95 PD-C400 is a five-disc rotary changer featuring fourtimes oversampling, 32-track programming, and an intro-scan feature.

Among the snazziest of the more traditional CD player introductions was Philips' high-end Bitstream design, the LHH500. This \$2000 one-bit digital-toanalog converting player incorporates dual DACs per channel in an inverting configuration for higher gain and, it is said, improved data integrity.

But perhaps the prettiest-and most impressiveof all the Chicago digital music goodies this year was Meridian's D-6000 digital speaker-an extension of the English firm's ground-breaking D-600 concept (CDR, September 1989). The new Meridian is a two-piece, full-range, three-way speaker with onboard electronics that include full preamp functions, multichannel amplification, on-board digital-toanalog conversion, and-uniquely-digital signal processing (DSP) via the extremely high-tech Motorola DSP56001 engine.

The D-6000's DSP is used, among other applications, to calibrate each individual unit to a reference standard, to perform digital-domain electronic crossover functions (a methodology with some powerful, genuine technical advantages), and to implement such preamp functions as tone-control changes. Of course, all this leading-edge stuff does not exactly come cheap: about \$12,000/pair.



The more conventional loudspeaker market in Chicago was not entirely quiet, either. Apogee, renowned among audiophiles everywhere for hightech, high-buck, full-range ribbon speakers, introduced the Centaur, at once its first more affordable design and its first hybrid loudspeaker model. The new design, at the relative bargain price of \$1495/ pair, combines a long-throw, 8-inch woofer and 26-inch, line-source ribbon driver (in a dipole configuration) in a stunning, 4-foot mini-monolith. The firm claims decent sensitivity for the new dynamic/ ribbon hybrid as well as realistic, near-concert-level peak loudness capability with amplifiers as modest as 50 watts per channel.

Another interesting speaker design was heard from relative newcomer Soundwave Technology. Loudspeakers from the Rochester, NY, firm feature a unique, double-driver design and triangular enclosure front said to promote uniquely smooth, diffraction-free response and unusually broad dispersion. Floating baffle boards are employed to decouple the drivers from the cabinet and to prevent any potential cabinet resonances from coloring the sound. The Soliloquy (\$2400/pair) is the next-to-top model

As always, CES also revealed a few products that defy categorization. One such was Commodore's CDTV. (According to its maker and potential lawsuits notwithstanding, this stands for Commodore

Dynamic Total Vision.) This is a combi-player of another stripe altogether. Audio CDs, CD+Graphics discs, and CD-ROM discs all are reproduced by Commodore's machine. The CDTV hooks up to a stereo system and a TV/monitor, and it includes a hand-held wireless remote controller to manage both CD functions and to respond to on-screen commands. Commodore expects to sell the basic CDTV for less than \$1000. The unit will accept many existing CD-ROM titles, and the firm expects more than 100 interactive CDTV discs to appear by this fall. Peripherals will then become available to upgrade CDTV to full personal computer capabilities.

Finally, the technology that may well have the largest long-term impact on home entertainment in general came (again) from the indefatigable engineers at Sony. The never-sleeping giant's Digital Signal Transfer system creates the potential to wire an entire house for simultaneous, multiroom digital audio and (analog) video with a minimum of effort. Using existing cable-television wiring (present in nearly half of American homes), the Sony DST broadcasts as many as four different stereo audio programs-in 44.1 kHz-sampled, digital audio format-to three different rooms, simultaneously. The system can also disseminate three video programs, also at the same time-though these remain in the analog domain.

DST works this magic by using proprietary digital data compression. Each destination room requires a Satellite Decoder/Amplifier (\$500) that incorporates the requisite D/A conversion, decompression algorithms, and a 40 w.p.c. stereo amp to power the room's loudspeakers (additional outboard amplifiers can be used instead). The Master Control Center, which contains the digital brains of the system and the myriad requisite audio and video inputs and outputs, goes for \$1000. This includes one Intelligent Remote Commander, a learning remote that sends commands from a satellite room back through the cabling to control both Sony and other brand source components back in the master room. Additional optional commanders-the decoder comes with a wall-mount basic system controller for each satellite room-are \$100. Thus, a basic, source-plus-tworoom setup tips the scales at about two grand-not cheap. But Sony's system registers extremely high on the gee-whiz scale, and it may legitimately be the wave of the future, too.

All three major trends of this summer's show-upgraded home theater, multiroom digital audio, and DAT—were seen primarily in high-end guise. This is often the case when new hi-fi developments first take the stage. Want to see more populist versions of any or all of these new technologies? You'll probably have to wait a while-perhaps all the way until January, for the 1991 winter CES. ■



MEDITATIVE SOUND OF OHM

BY DAVID MORAN

hm is another of that small but distinguished band of American speaker firms to have survived for almost two decades. Two early Ohm models used an entirely novel dunce cap-like dynamic driver to cover the full audio band. This coverage was truly "omni"—equi-omni, in other words—for broad and spacious sound, albeit with rolled-off treble. But these designs were expensive, terribly inefficient, and their single unique driver was difficult to manufacture with consistency. Ohm's current flagship, the Walsh 5, has sounded like a clear winner in my limited exposure to it—but it costs \$5000.

The object of our attention, the FRS 11 (Full Room Stereo), employs a modern descendant of the classic Ohm downward-facing cone that the company calls its Coherent Line Source (CLS) driver. This too is mounted facing downward. Fastened to the magnet at the top of the inverted driver, however, is an additional, conventional tweeter. Each of the imposing FRS 11 cabinets is marked on one of its corners, directing placement to angle this tweeter inward so that the stereo pair crossfires toward the listening position. The goal is "stereo everywhere" dispersion-that is, left/right-balanced imaging available to more than just one listener seated at the "sweet spot."

The \$1100 a pair Ohm FRS 11 is a tall, square, imposing column, three-and-a-half feet high by a foot wide and deep, finished in oak vinyl. The drivers at top are invisible inside a protective mesh cylinder. The non-removable cylinder is surrounded by a rectangular-profile wire-frame grille covered in black cloth.

The generic FRS-line manual doesn't include any specific boundary-placement advice. Nevertheless, for best performance the FRS 11 ought not to be located three feet from walls—this is the distance of its main driver from the floor, and such placement resulting in "cubic" boundary dimensions will seriously roughen (peaks and dips) its response in the 100 to 500 Hz area of upper bass and lower midrange. Thus, I staggered distances as best I could (one to two feet from the front wall, four to five from the side, then vice versa) and sat back to listen.

Among others, test discs included some Mozart flute quartets (Mannheim Quartet, Titanic 172) for exquisitely recorded delicacy in a moderate-size space, Brahms' Concerto No. 1 for Piano (Rudolf Serkin, with George Szell conducting the Cleveland Orchestra, CBS MYK 37803) for edgily recorded power in a



OHM FRS 11 LOUDSPEAKERS

large space, and the Beatles' "The Night Before" (*Help*, Capitol CDP 46439), for sheer pleasure—and also to track John Lennon's rocking though buried piano.

The FRS 11's sound was smooth, mellow, and full—almost warm in tonal balance. Over several days of auditioning it seemed to grow a little thick, especially with voice, sometimes even chesty. (A spoken-voice recording—Lynn Redgrave reading Jane Austen—also revealed this emphasis pointedly.) I found highs to sound quite flat and extended, but not particularly spacious—yet the midrange region was quite spacious. Perfectly acceptable bass was evident, at 50 to 60 Hz, and on the Stones' televised Steel Wheels Tour broadcast the Ohm loudspeakers went satisfyingly loud and low with good sensitivity.

Imaging was large, broad, perhaps vague,

but not confused. The resulting soundstage was mostly stable, with pleasing depth to the midrange and low midrange; the Cleveland Orchestra sounded majestically present. Offcenter, there was indeed some consistently left/ right-balanced "stereo everywhere" to the highs and treble overtones. But it's difficult to say whether this effect was much more pronounced than that achieved simply by turning conventional, forward-firing speakers 45 degrees inward toward the sweet spot. The monophonic Beatles CD showed that the middle frequencies, as in John Lennon's voice, did relocate toward the nearer speaker when I moved out of the sweet spot. (Keeping mono sound sources centered is, paradoxically, the true test of "stereo everywhere.")

Altogether, the Ohm FRS 11 provides a certain kind of rich, reasonably balanced sound,

Photo by Larry Dunn

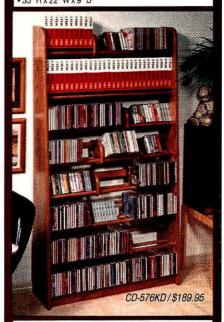




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 CD-260A fully assembled/CD-260KD assembles easily • 35"H x 22"W x 9"D



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TEST REPORT OHM FRS 11 LOUDSPEAKERS

Manufacturer's Specifications

Type and driver complement:

Frequency Response:

Nominal Impedance:

Suggested Retail Price:

Sensitivity:

Dimensions:

Finish:

Address:

Dynamic; one CLS inverted cone driver and one tweeter

(no diameters specified) per vented cabinet

35-22,000 Hz, ±4 dB 90 dB, input level unspecified

Oak-grain vinyl, black knit grille cap

43 x 12 x 12 inches

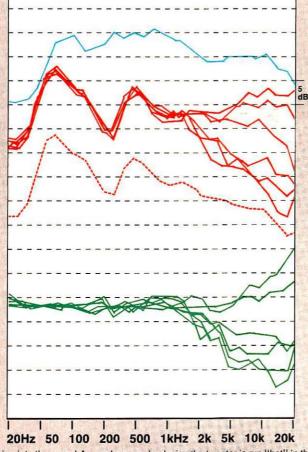
\$1100/pair Ohm Acoustics Corp., 241 Taafe Place, Brooklyn, NY 11205

Curve A (Blue)-**Room Response**

At top is a representative stereo room response. Obviously, the FRS 11 measures well (and interestingly), with unusual smoothness-exceptionally so for the directional tweeter. The overall balance is uniformly depressed above 1 to 2 kHz, explaining my sonic reaction of warmth. A treble control that begins boosting at 1 kHz could be put to good use. Even with staggered boundary placement, a notch between 100 to 200 Hz remained, but here it was only 4 dB or so. Placement closer to corners would probably worsen this dip, but would bring up the 50 to 60 Hz level.

Curve Family B (Red)-Horizontal Radiation

The second family of curves is a single speaker's horizontal output radiation. Measurements are anechoic except for a floor, continuously averaged seven to 10 feet away and 30 to 40 inches high, taken at 0, 30, 60, 90, 135, and 180 degrees ±15 degrees. (In the case of the Ohm



loudest axis, the one crossfiring into the room.) As can be seen, by design the tweeter is run "hot" in the crossfiring direction and severely muted in the opposite direction. Note the omnidirectionality of the CLS driver up to 1500 Hz. At the bottom of this family is the total horizontal output, averaged: strikingly smooth from 400 Hz to 10 kHz, with no crossover seams showing, albeit tilted downward 3 dB/octave (12 dB overall).

Curve Family C (Green)—Imaging Quality

At bottom is the imaging family of curves showing difference in the output by angle from the first arrival of sound. This output becomes the reflections that largely create stereo image. Note again the almost perfectly omni character of the output up to 1500 Hz, the strong rolloff of the reflections above, and the increasing relative loudness above 4000 Hz of the crossfiring tweeters—again correlating with what was heard and "imagined" from the FRS 11's stereo imaging.

Altogether, a nice execution of a certain kind of broad, warm, omni soundstage, so smooth that it may be easily readjusted with simple tone controls should your taste call for it.

Test Equipment: compensated AKG microphone ensemble, Sound Technology RTA 4000 (formerly dbx RTA-1), dbx BX-1 power amplifier.

from a novel design that has real virtues of omnidirectionality and broad-listening-angle imaging. I sometimes would elevate my preamp's treble control to brighten things up for the sake of clarity. But CDs made from rather biting 1960s-era master tapes, like the

Brahms concerto, benefit especially from the Ohm's warmth of soundstage. And Lennon's driving piano could be discerned in its murky mix. I enjoyed my time spent with the system, and encourage you (especially classical music lovers) to make its acquaintance as well.



THE RIGHT HI-FI STUFF

Upgrading your stereo gear is bard enough. Picking out your first set of components can be even more daunting. In the first of a three-part series, our experts reveal some personal choices for a basic, \$1000 stereo system.



NAD 7225PE 25 watts-per-channel FM Receiver: \$329 Allison CD 6 two-way loudspeakers: \$460 Technics SLPC25 five-disc rotary CD changer: \$260 Total: \$1049

o what system should I get?," audio journalists continually are asked. This is usually the last of a series of questions. Others include, "Is there anything really new in hi-fi these days?"; "Why don't you and other reviewers tell the truth about bad gear?"; and "Is there anything at all to the testimonials about green magic marker on CD edges?" To which the answers are: Yes; I try to, but you must read a lot of any reviewer's work to know his or her tastes between the lines: and No.

Returning to question number one, here is my deliberately considered choice for a basic system, designed for a consumer budget of \$1000 at the manufacturer's suggested price (yeah, I cheated by \$49 retail—so sue me). Of course, with the kind of discounting found in audio—especially all-at-once system purchases—it should commonly be less.

One thousand dollars is a tough price in which to combine loud and clean low bass from speakers, huge amounts of usable amplifier power, and full remote control. Thus, the last is lacking here. But my choices represent no mere rhetorical exercise. Several members of my family happily own this same receiver and/or speakers—and the only reason they don't have the Technics CD changer was that it's a brand-new model. I'll wager that for years to come this system will be unsurpassed by most any of your friends' stereo systems.

Dozens of \$300 receivers vie for the consumer dollar. Most have many more fancy features than the simple NAD 7225—even a few worthwhile ones. Several have remote control, missing on the NAD. Most have more

nominal, on-paper wattage, and many look slicker—not so traditional. But few will prove as simple to operate or will look and sound as clean or deliver such fine FM reception. And very few indeed will put out as much usable power into the Allison Acoustics CD 6, or most other relatively low-impedance, high-performance, real-world loudspeakers.

While there are heaps of two-way loudspeakers available, few produce the low bass of Allison's CD 6, and none to my knowledge has such full, solid, smooth upper bass/lower midrange—where most of the action is in music. Nor will you find much to compare with the treble and high-treble dispersion of the Allison tweeter. This sends as much sound sideways (90 degrees off-axis) as straight ahead, giving highs a wonderfully spacious, enveloping quality.

The bane of all two-way speakers is crossover roughness—peaks and dips at the woofer/tweeter interaction, usually between

Photos by Larry Dunn





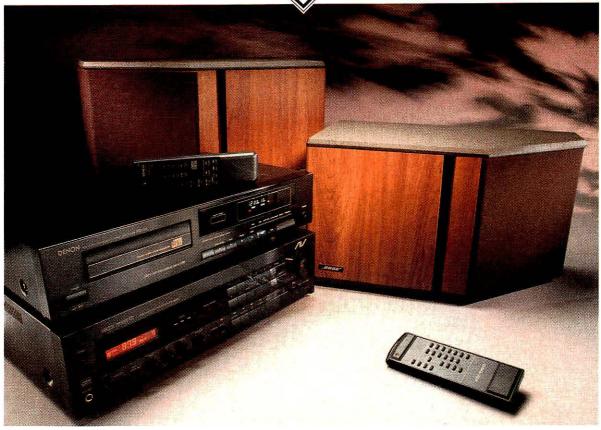
Featuring Felix Slatkin, Carmen Dragon, Miklos Rozsa, Michael Rabin and Leonard Pennario, every release was a best-seller.

Now, Angel is proud to make these classic recordings available for the first time on mid-priced Compact Discs and Cassettes, greatly expanded over their original LP make ups and digitally re-mastered from the original three-channel master tapes.









1 and 2 kHz. While Allison's CD 6 isn't perfect in this regard, I know of nothing any better. Indeed, by some margin, this is the finest modestly priced two-way I have heard or measured. It yields musical, faithful, and very full-range sound with stable stereo imaging maintained over a wide listening angle.

Of the current, prolific CD changer crop—both low- and not-so-low priced—Technics' five-disc SLPC25 is a hard choice on which to improve. This one-bit, MASH design will decode all the dynamics, levels, and phase relationships on any CD with outstanding accuracy, affording a transparent window on the recording's original master tape. Or, in this case, a batch of *five* such masters. If that's what you want from a CD player (and who would not?), you won't go wrong.

-David Moran

Vector Research VRX-3600R 40 watts-per-channel A/V receiver: \$299 Bose 4.2 two-way bookshelf loudspeakers: \$399/pr.

Denon DCD-520 CD player: \$250 Total: \$948

It's an audio/video world we live in, and even on a budget you can create a versatile entertainment system that delivers the highimpact thrill of choice at the touch of a remote button. Today, the cornerstone of any moderately priced system remains—as it always has been—the receiver. But these days, this practical, convenient, all-in-one box must offer even more than the traditional AM/FM tuner, phono input, audio tape loops and various other line-level inputs such as (of course!) CD and good old AUX.

Now, a well-provided, really useful receiver also offers video switching. And I don't mean for just the sound—but switching that also simultaneously selects the picture from among a couple of VCRs or a videodisc player, with a video output to feed the image of choice to a monitor.

You won't find many low-priced receivers that do this.

But oddly enough, a few do offer surround sound without video switching—even though it's movies that deliver the most stunning application of surround. Vector Research includes full provisions for two video sources in its model VRX-3600R receiver (\$299), a slickly designed component rated at 40 watts per channel. The rub is that the audio portion for those two A/V link-ups also serves as the traditional, audio-only tape loops. So you have to make some system-setup choices—or expand your options by using an inexpensive outboard audio tape switch box.

Beyond its video factor, the remote-controllable VRX-3600R has much to recommend it as a first receiver. Connections for two sets of speakers permit stereo hookup in two locations, or you can position the B speakers at the back of your room to enjoy a rudimentary synthesized (matrix) surround effect. The receiver's rear panel also provides inputs for phono and CD; a processor loop for, say, an equalizer; pre-out connections to employ the Vector's control section with a more powerful, outboard amplifier; and two AC convenience outlets. The tuner section is quite satisfactory, and most other aspects of the receiver's design are fairly standard.

If your living space dictates bookshelf speakers, an excellent choice might be the Bose model 4.2 (\$399/pair). Efficient enough for the Vector Research receiver to handle easily, the 4.2s also are compact—they stand just 9.5 inches high by 18 inches wide and 10 inches deep. Enclosures are mirror-imaged, each containing an eight-inch woofer with a 2.5-inch, axial-mounted tweeter angled toward the center of the listening area. That arrangement, plus a dual-chamber bass venting design, generates both exceptionally deep, accurate bass, and a stereo image that remains stable from most any point in the room. (An alternative for those who can accommodate larger, floorstanding speakers: DCM's slim TimeFrame 350s combine compactness, efficiency, and, at \$449 a pair, economy.)

Given \$1000 to spend on a complete system, let's skip the cassette deck and go for quality basic components; when you're flush again,

"Model Eleven...Exquisite Sound...Dwarfs Any Portable Stereo...A High Tech Wonder."



- Fits under airline seats-23 lbs.
- Can be checked as luggage.
- · Works on all electrical systems.
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nent systems. And because we market it directly from our factory, it costs hundreds less than it would in stores.

Model Eleven's three speakers are designed to work with a room's acoustics to create seamless, musically accurate sound virtually identical to our critically acclaimed Ensemble® speaker system. And it can be used anywhere in the world—115- or 230-volts AC, or 12-volts DC.

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Model Eleven™ is the first transportable high performance component music system. It consists of a powerful 3-channel amplifier and two "satellite" high-frequency speakers—all packed in a "BassCase"™ that, when empty, serves as the system's subwoofer. Model Eleven's performance, when coupled with your portable CD or tape

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The drivers used in Model Eleven's twoway satellitie speakers are no-compromise, high-performance components—just like you'd expect to find in the finest home

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Ensemble is a speaker system that can provide the sound once reserved for the best speakers under laboratory conditions. It virtually disappears in your room. And because we market it directly, it costs hundreds less than it would in stores.

Your living room works with Ensemble, not against it.

No matter how well a speaker performs, at home your room takes over. Putting other speakers where the room helps the bass may hinder the upper ranges, or vice-versa. Ensemble consists of four units: two bass units and two high frequency "satellites." The compact woofer units produce the bass that normally requires large speakers. Place them behind furniture, on bookshelves or under a couch. The small satellites blend into any decor. The result: a full range, musically accurate speaker system without big boxes.

At only \$599† (or \$499† with utility woofer cabinets)—complete with all hardware and 100' of speaker cable-Ensemble is the value on today's speaker market. Esquire magazine describes them by saying, "You get a month to play with the speakers before you either return

them or keep them. But you'll keep them." Stereo Review said "It's hard to imagine going wrong with Ensemble."





Henry Kloss created the dominant speaker models of the '50s (AR), '60s (KLH) and '70s (Advent)-as well as our highly acclaimed Ensemble and Ambiance™ speakers. While packing a stereo system into a suitcase before a vacation, he realized that an amplifier, a CD player and two small speakers take up the same space required for an acoustic suspension woofer to reproduce really deep bass. That was the inspiration

for BassCase, Model Eleven's bass speaker enclosure which doubles as the entire system's carrying case.

Ambiance™ by Henry Kloss

Ambiance is an ultra-compact speaker that proves high

performance, small size and low cost need not be mutually exclusive. Stereo Review said "very few small speakers we have heard can match the overall sound of Ambiance, and we know of none that surpass it." In Nextel or primed for painting, \$109+ each. In solid oak, \$129† each.

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add a deck, if you like. But the CD player is absolutely fundamental. Happily, in this digital age you can do very well indeed for modest dollars. And nowhere better than Denon's DCD-520, which at \$250 offers dual digital-to-analog converters with a 16-bit configuration and four-times oversampling.

-Lawrence B. Johnson

Sony D-555 Portable CD player with DSP and digital output: \$450 Atlantic Technology Pattern biamplified, active subwoofer-satellite speaker system: \$499 Headphone allowance: \$50 Total: \$999

This system breaks all the rules. There's no receiver—not even a conventional amplifier or preamp. As a result, there's no radio. So what? You can catch the really important games on the car stereo. For music, stick to CDs. They sound *much* better, they always play the music *you* want to hear, and they don't have commercials.

There's no conventional tabletop CD player, either. Instead, you get a portable—but not just any carry-around design. Sony's D-555 (CDR, August 1989) provides above-average sonics plus extensive digital signal processing

(DSP) functions. These include a five-band, all-digital graphic equalizer for any desired tonal changes. (Tone control in a conventional system happens in the analog domain at the receiver or amp, with potentially degraded sound.) Also among the Sony's DSP effects is digitally implemented, adjustable compression for reducing dynamic range during background listening or playback in noisy environments. Try finding that on a regular \$1000 system.

Expandability is vital in my view—for any system. The D-555's digital output means that its bitstream can be patched over to the highend digital preamp (processor, speaker, or whatever) of choice, years hence, creating whatever level of super performance available in the future. In the meantime, you can stock up on optional D-555 extras from Sony, add full remote control, or transform it into a perfectly good automotive CD source.

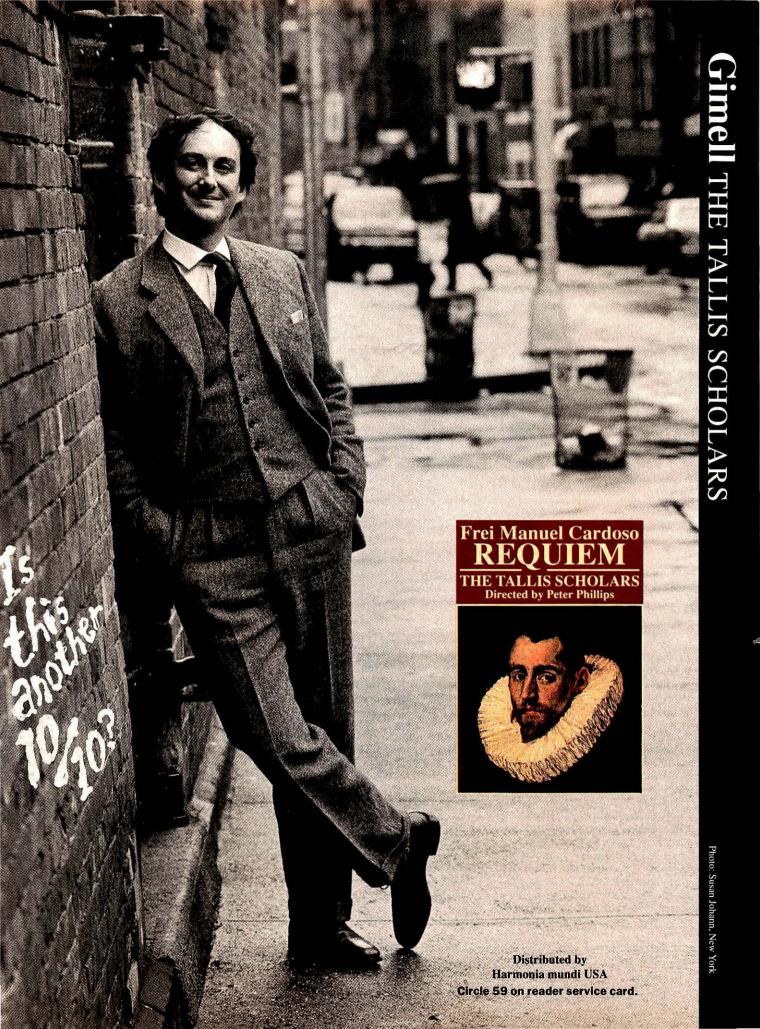
Most hi-fi systems in this range can only muster a pair of small, two-way speakers and a low-power amp or receiver. My proposal employs a more innovative approach. Atlantic Technology's Pattern system is a three-piece, amplified design that replaces both speaker and amplifier. Its two 15-watt satellite amplifier channels and single, 30-watt woofer amp are

applied in biamplified mode, yielding pretty impressive dynamic range. Three inputs automatically switch to the active source so you can add components such as tape decks or tuners later on. (They can even mix sources, permitting you to play your electric guitar along with a favorite Van Halen tune.) Pattern's tiny satellites encourage creative room placement, while the single bass/amplifier unit can be tucked somewhere bass-effective, or merely convenient

True, Pattern is not the be-all, end-all best sounding loudspeaker ever made (although the D-555's digital EQ can make big improvements). But it provides decent overall balance, realistic loudness levels, and quite reasonably extended low bass for a system in this range. Plus, should your upgraded system outgrow Pattern, I guarantee you'll always find a use for such versatility: As a stand-alone rear channel surround-sound setup, for example.

Meanwhile, for critical listening—and for all the portable use you'll get out of the free-wheeling D-555—you'll want a pair of lightweight headphones. This is too personal a choice for me to make. Read our regular headphone features, and do lots of critical listening in stores. Fifty bucks should buy a good set.

-Daniel Kumin ■



TAPE RECORDER TRIALS

BY DAVID RANADA



he compact disc may be the latest, greatest music format technology has

analog audio cassette remains the medium of choice. Cassettes offer convenience, carryability, and cost-effectiveness second to none. But just how well will 21st-century digital recordings translate to the quarter-century-old cassette? And how can we optimize the transfer?

From instant to instant, music makes different demands on any analog taping system. Limiting factors can swing wildly between noise and overload levels and low- and highfrequency response—all depending on the the music. Whether or not you hear any tape or deck misbehavior isn't easily predictable, since the ear reacts to sound quite differently than does a recording system. The trick to making a good recording on an analog tape deck therefore is knowing how and when to trade off the demands of the ear against the limitations of the recording medium. To that end, you must have a firm grasp of how to set recording levels, how to choose a tape, and how to sonically analyze music for its demands on a tape deck. The series of experiments covered here are designed

to give you a feel for precisely these three aspects of recording.

Experiment 1: Learning The Meters

First, you must get to know your deck. Set up your deck to make a dub of a loud passage on the type of tape you normally use. Choose demanding material with strong levels of high frequencies—massed strings and brass, or cleanly recorded rock or jazz drums with plenty of cymbal work. Record the passage, using your normal noise-reduction system, once with the level quite low, perhaps reading only -3 or -6 dB on the meters. Then, repeat the recording, boosting the level slightly while taking note of the highest meter reading achieved. Do this several times, raising the level each time until you are pinning the meters (they are peaking as high as they go).

Don't worry, you won't damage anything—especially if the meters are flashing-light LED strings instead of needles. On playback, compensate for the different recording levels with your amp's volume control, and listen carefully for the onset of tape overload as the recorded levels (but not your listening levels)

increase.

Depending on the music and the tape, overload usually shows up

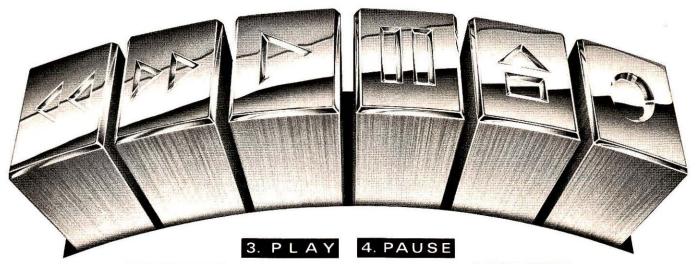
first as impactless or distorted low bass, compressed-sounding midrange, or rolled-off top end. Through this process, you should be able to find a maximum meter reading that produces good sounding recordings with that particular tape. Write down the results for future reference, and repeat the entire exercise for other tape brands or grades you might use. This collection of allowed maximums will help you to set peak levels on your recordings. Be forewarned: They may differ a little or a lot from the deck manufacturer's level-setting recommendations.

To obtain the best possible tape deck sound, you must understand the purpose and function of relevant controls. This dictum doesn't apply to such sonically superfluous features as blankinserting buttons, tape-counter controls, or other advanced cueing features.

But it does apply to the two most important controls on your deck: the record-level adjustment and the level meters. Using the former is fairly easy—just push the sliders or turn the knob. But reading the signal on your meters as you change the recording setting can make the difference between a perfect dub and a washed-

Illustration by Bob Dukette

IF YOU WANT TO PLAY DAT MUSIC YOU GOTTA PUSH THE RIGHT BUTTONS.



1. REWIND

to just a few years ago.

Manufacturers of digital audio tape (DAT) recorders and the recording industry are at loggerheads over this new technology. DAT's sound is sensational and its cassette format is convenient, but the recording industry is concerned over DAT's ability to make superior copies.

2. FAST FORWARD

A compromise! The electronics manufacturers and the record companies have agreed to draft a law setting a new standard for DATs. The DAT Bill will allow direct digital taping from CDs, but not digital copies of the copies.

The Digital Audio Tape Act of 1990, H.R. 4096/ S. 2356—companion bills introduced in the U.S. Congress. A glitch! Some music publishers and the Songwriters Guild break with the record companies and oppose the DAT Bill unless consumers are forced to pay a royalty tax on blank tape and recorders.

5. EJECT

this illogical, negative noise! We've heard this song before. The same wolf-crying about new technology that's been around since the introduction of audio cassettes and video recorders.

6. RECORD

your support for the DAT Bill. Congress will pass the DAT Bill—without any royalty tax—only if it hears from you. Send us this coupon TODAY.

THE DAT BILL. NOW'S THE TIME.

Home Recording Rights Coalition A coalition of consumers, retailers and manufacturers of recording products dedicated to preserving your right to use these products free of private taxes or government interference.

Circle 53 on reader service card.

RECORD r	ny support for the
DAT bill ar	nd against any roy-
alty tax o	on blank tape or
recorders.	
Name	
Address	(C
City	
State	Zip
(
Area Code	Telephone Number
	IRRC, Box 33705
1145 19th	
Washingtr	n, DC 20033.

us! 1-800-282-TAPE.

out, hissy, under-recorded tape, or one that is continuously overloaded and distorted.

Nearly all tape deck level meters are peak reading, meaning that they indicate the instantaneous peak of the waveform being recorded. Trouble is, excepting at low frequencies, your ears don't hear the waveform; they hear its spectrum and envelope. Furthermore, analog tapes and tape decks don't overload suddenly on peaks, unlike amplifiers or digital systems. Overload is a gradual affair, with steadily increasing amounts of distortion as the recording level is raised. Put these two facts together and you may find that you can be far more liberal with your recording levels than you previously thought, which ultimately will yield recordings with lower background-noise levels.

Know your tape. It is established audio doctrine that you get the best recordings when the electromagnetic characteristics of your tape deck precisely match the requirements of the tape in use. Tape/deck matching is more critical than ever, because any frequency response or sensitivity (playback level) errors introduced by a mismatch will be either exaggerated by the use of a noise-reduction system or will cause a noise-reduction decoder to mistrack the operation of its encoder, introducing improper variations in musical dynamics. And you simply can't get a good sounding recording from the best of today's CDs without using noise-reduction.

Ideally, three parameters should be matched: record equalization, record level (fine-tuning for tape sensitivity), and bias. Unfortunately, a deck is most likely to provide an adjustment only for bias, if anything. Most manufacturers expect you to compensate for mismatches in the other parameters using only the bias control. For example, the typical procedure for using a bias knob involves adjusting it so that high- and low-frequency test tones read the same level on the meters, or, as an alternative, that a random noise signal (pink noise from a test disc or FM interstation hiss) sounds the same when monitoring from the source or off the tape. But what you are actually adjusting when following these procedures is high frequency response and, to some extent, recording sensitivity. Ideally, both of these should be adjusted separately, and the bias control used only to minimize distortion.

Recording level/sensitivity controls (not to be confused with the *overall* record level controls, which come before any noise-reduction encoding) are more common now compared to a few years ago. Perhaps this is due to the stringent demands that the Dolby C noise-reduction system makes on level matching. For proper Dolby operation, the level of signal you obtain off the tape should be the same as the level fed to it. A couple dBs of error up or down will produce negligible errors with Dolby B, but could produce audible pumping artifacts with Dolby C. The new Dolby S

EVALUATING MUSIC SOURCES

The easiest source to tape-record-regardless of music type or original medium-is radio, either AM or FM. Not only is its signal sharply rolled off at the highest frequencies (above 15 kHz for FM, much lower for AM), making deck response at those frequencies almost irrelevant. But practically all FM stations, even the rare few noted for sound quality, process their signals so as to deliberately reduce dynamic range-usually to levels that will fit comfortably for a tape deck with Dolby C, or (depending on program material) even Dolby B noise-reduction. For a typical pop station, this processing is meant to improve its coverage rather than its soundthe geographical reach that so affects a station's financial bottom line, by allowing more listeners to receive it (and its commercials). Operators of typical classical stations will tell you that their dynamicrange processing aids in reception on the lower-quality table and car radios that so many of their listener/contributors use (the lowest common denominator effect in action). Regardless of the reasoning behind it, signal compression on radio greatly eases the dubbing task. Performance requirements for the tape, the deck, and the noise-reduction system are greatly reduced.

After compression, there is another factor aiding the off-the-air recordist: the FCC. This regulatory body sets limits for the maximum output level for every station. This 100 percent modulation level will produce the same output level from your tuner for every station on the dial. Obviously, this further aids in setting proper recording levels. If you dub only one type of music from the airwaves, you may be able to set and forget your levels. One important note: If you are using a noise-reduction system for off-the-air dubs, make sure the 19 kHz multiplex (MPX) filter on your tape deck is switched on. This will reduce the possibility of noise-reduction mistracking on playback.

Next up on the list of dubbing sources are other tapes, either home-made or prerecorded, with the latter being slightly easier to copy because of their comparatively limited dynamic range. Tape dubbing is as straightforward as with radio, since it is likely that the limiting sonic factors will stem from the original tape—not your dub of it—and because a well-made tape original will have already taken such

factors as the musical spectrum and levels into account.

There are a few things you should remember when dubbing tapes, however. Despite the popularity of dual-well high-speed dubbing decks, you'll get better quality by copying tapes at normal speed. This is especially true if the original was recorded using a Dolby noise-reduction system. Any noise-reduction on the original tape should be decoded before recording the signal on to your copy—even if that copy also is made with noise reduction. This is impossible during high-speed dubbing.

If you use two decks of disparate quality, the standard rule of thumb is to record from the lesser quality deck to the better. If the better deck is a three-head unit, however, you just might get better results if the signal flows from it to the lesser deck, where the latter is only a two-head machine. This is because an optimized playback head in the three-head unit will provide better high-frequency performance, and the combination record/playback head in the lesser deck will probably be slightly better at recording than playing back. It only takes a single trial recording to find out which signal path is best.

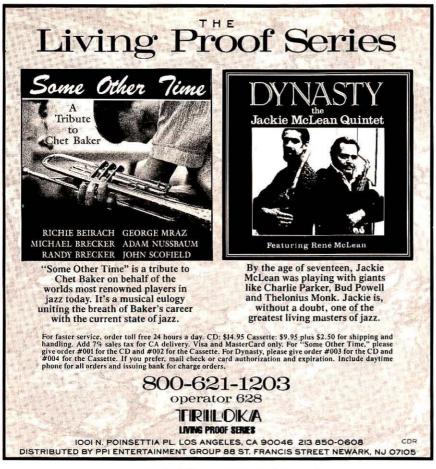
Compact discs are obviously the most demanding source, since their potentially very wide dynamic range over the full audible spectrum, and freedom from wow and flutter, can both make stringent demands on a tape dubbing setup. A topnotch dub of CD music with wide dynamic range can be very challenging. Everything must be in perfect working order. The deck should be clean (to reduce wow and flutter). Its heads should be aligned (for best high-frequency performance). The record levels and equalization, as well as bias, should be properly set, and a carefully calibrated noise-reduction system must be switched in.

These requirements may sound tough, and they are. But when everything is working just right, you can create copies—even of difficult classical music—that sound virtually indistinguishable from their originals. Of course, if you want absolutely identical copies of CDs, and you don't want to go through the myriad matching/alignment hassles of analog tape, the digital audio tape (DAT) option is now, at long last, open.



(1-900-234-8458 INTRODUCTORY PRICE: 99¢/MIN)

- Late-breaking News
- Caller Reviews Give Wayne Hell
 - Indie CD Reviews Free CDs awarded to the day's best calls... plus a monthly grand prize!



Circle 55 on reader service card.

system, coming later this year, is said to be as effective as Dolby C while remaining less critically dependent on precise levels. What's more, Dolby S should provide outstanding dynamic range and backward playback compatibility with Dolby B and C encoded tapes. So far, hands-on experience with Dolby S is still far too limited to confirm these claims.

Home decks with user adjustments for recording equalization are extremely rare, and tape companies themselves exacerbate this aspect of the tape/deck matching problem. They keep introducing hotter tapes, formulations with deliberately elevated high-frequency responses. Sometimes they even show the nonflat response graph on the cellophane cassette wrappers. When such tapes are used on decks adjusted for cooler formulations (most decks on the market), you may get poorer results than had you stuck with a less advanced-and probably less expensive-tape. Since the decks I have access to don't have record-EO controls, I avoid the boosted formulations of each tape type (I, II or IV).

While every name-brand tape maker will report that most dubbing is done on the lowest quality Type I (ferric) tape they offer, you can do much better by spending very little more. But you don't have to go to chrome (Type II) or metal (Type IV) formulations to get very good results. Using a higher-quality Type I tape, together with a deck including both the

Dolby HX Pro headroom extension system and Dolby C noise reduction, will provide quality suitable for most music under most playback and listening conditions. Sticking with Type I tape—even with only Dolby B—has some advantages, the principal one being that a recording made on such a tape will be more universally playable on low-quality portable and car stereo equipment. These may well omit the metal tape switch.

Experiment 2. Tape/Deck Matching

Buy one each of every brand and type cassette you are considering for use with your deck. Try to obtain a test CD with a band of pink noise on it. (Denon C39-7441; Philips SBC429.) If you can't find a test disc, use the hiss FM radio produces when tuned between stations with any tuner muting turned off. If you have a three-head deck, the next part is simple; if you have a two-head deck, it is somewhat less convenient. Record the pink noise or interstation hiss at a fairly low level (-10 to -20 dB on the meters) with your favorite Dolby circuit engaged, and listen to the recorded noise while switching your monitoring between source and tape. Listen for any change in the character of the noise (especially the high frequencies) and any noticeable level change.

Do this for every single tape under consideration, and select the one that alters the sound the *least*. If your deck has bias or record-level

(sensitivity) controls, adjust them according to the manufacturer's instructions before performing this experiment. Don't be surprised, however, if most standard-formulation tapes perform to just about equivalent levels of quality. Among the high quality brands, audible differences are smaller than what you might expect from the results of those tape tests in audio hobbyist publications.

Experiment 3. Learning the Music

Nearly everybody likes more than one style of music. Go through your discs and gather up as varied a collection as possible. A half dozen very different cuts will suffice. Record each track so that its highest level peak registers to the same level on your deck's meters (say, 0 dB). Play the tape back with the same volume level setting for each track.

Even if you have a very limited variety of music, you will probably notice that some tracks sound less loud than others—even though they were taped at the same peak levels. Listen again to the recorded sequence, this time adjusting the volume for a comfortable listening level for each track. Concentrate on background noise and you'll notice that some tracks now sound hissier than others.

These experiments demonstrate that your tape deck reacts differently to sound than do your ears. Experiment 1 showed that you may be able to let your levels swing wildly into the red for very short transients with no objectionable sonic consequences. The tape probably will have overloaded at least slightly during your recordings, but you may be unlikely to hear it. If Experiment 2 had been tried with a real music signal instead of steady random noise, you would have been hard pressed to clearly hear differences among tapes, since your attention would have been continuously redirected by the music.

Experiment 3 also shows that the music itself can have a great deal to do with the audibility of faults in the recording system. If the music you record is consistently loud, you may be able to record at a slightly lower level than normal to obtain lower distortion while the high levels of higher frequencies in such music effectively mask any tape background noise. In fact, almost any unvaryingly loud music may be recordable without noise reduction. (The reduction of distortion obtained by recording heavy metal at lower levels will in any case be masked by the distortion commonly built into the music, but that's another story.)

Consistently soft music is easier to record as well. Simply boost the overall recording level. Music recorded with a wide dynamic range—like many jazz albums, some pop albums, and the vast majority of classical music—poses the greatest challenge. And the best way to meet the challenge is not to blindly accept the self-serving promotions of tape companies as to which tape to use, but to continually experiment with your deck and a variety of tapes.



A MULTIMEDIA MARVEL

BY DANIEL KUMIN



ioneer's CLD-3080 is the latest example of those CD-audio/laser videodisc hybrids—combi-players—that handle CDs, eight- and 12-inch laser videodiscs, and the rare five-inch CD-Video disc, all with equal aplomb. The CLD-3080 represents the third generation of this cross-breed and it supplies enough high-tech componentry and feature flash to wow even the most jaded audio/video buff.

At the top of the whiz-bang parade is a Pioneer exclusive: two-sided play. That's right, the CLD-3080 plays both sides of a laserdisc without requiring you to remove and flip the platter. This is accomplished by an amazingly compact laser pickup sled (the same one services audio and video discs) which rides on a fairly intricate track. When a side change is called for, the sled retracts, turns a somersault, raises the disc a bit, and slides neatly underneath to play the B side. It's a bit like watching a slightly demented R2-D2 in action.

Other features abound, including a plethora of programming and repeat options, most of which can be applied identically to both audio and video disc types. But the best story is less obvious.

Thanks to Pioneer's Direct Linear Converter D/A system (a calibrated dual-18-bit converter design with 20-bit, noise-shaping eight-times oversampled digital filtering), this player produces highly accurate CD playback. And of equal interest, due to enhanced video S/N from a sophisticated new self-centering disc drive, built-in digital time-base correction (an anti-jitter circuit), and a new video dynamic-range enhancement circuit, it also produces what may be the finest video image currently available to the home viewer.

The new Pioneer's layout follows that of previous combi designs. A full-width disc tray reveals no less than four concentric cutouts sized for all possible discs. The tray is quite slim, to keep the unit as compact as possible. When open, this results in a slightly flimsy feel—still a reasonable compromise. Below is a very slick little drawer that slides out to expose most operational controls, including a 10-plus direct track/chapter access keypad, skip forward/reverse buttons, and the now-familiar Pioneer jog/shuttle wheel combination. This permits discs of any type to be advanced or reversed as quickly as 20 times normal, or as slowly as block by block (or frame by frame), with

a twist of its inner or outer wheels.

The controls can afford to be hidden away in the drawer because all are duplicated by the CLD-3080's fine wireless remote control—even the jog/shuttle set up. One of several other notable feature is the unit's ability to file program sequences for as many as 60 CDs or laserdiscs. These series may be up to 10 selections in length, though the unit's individual disc programming can handle 20 CD tracks or laserdisc chapters.

The comprehensive amber display manifests elapsed or remaining time in every possible variation and contains indicating icons for the CLD-3080's many functions and features. A music calendar display shows tracks up to a 20-count and shifts during playback to 20-39, 40-59, and so on up to the CD medium's theoretical 99-track limit. Uniquely, the CLD-3080 displays twin calendars—one for side A, one for B—in videodisc mode. However, best of all are the unit's onscreen read-outs. While playing CDs, the CLD-3080 puts the full set of track, time, and calendar info up on the video monitor in big, legible characters.

Construction of the large Pioneer player is
Photo by Larry Dunn

AMERICA'S

HE RCA RECORDS

Do you recognize these hits? They're all greats you'll want in your music collection.

ENNIO MORRICONE • "The Legendary Italian Westerns"

9974-4/2-R

...and the music that made them unforgettable from the acclaimed composer/conductor, including "A Fistful Of Dollars," "For A Few Dollars More," "Once Upon A Time In The West" and more. Spaghetti not included.



ELVIS PRESLEY • "Elvis' Gold

Records, Vol. 4" • 1297-2-R

It seems almost every song Elvis sang turned to gold, including "What'd I Say," "Indescribably Blue," "A Mess Of Blues" and more. They're all here!



TOMMY DORSEY/FRANK SINATRA "All Time Greatest Hits, Vol. 4 (And The Historic Stordahl Session) " • 2269-4/2-R

"The Hollywood Men"

This compilation celebrates 60

years of great movie music by

Crosby, Chevalier, Belafonte,

"The Shadow Of Your Smile"

Presley, Sinatra and more.

Includes "Night And Day,"

and "Everybody's Talkin"."

Boys, take a bow.

9966-4/2-R

These 20 great tracks include the historic Stordahl session of January 19, 1942 (featuring Skitch Henderson on piano), with "The Night We Called It A Day," "The Lamplighter's Serenade" and Cole Porter's "Night And Day."



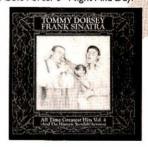
Learn the forbidden dance from Brazil, Lambada! Now you can step right into the heat of things with this album that gives you a step-by-step photo



SOUNDTRACK • "Pinocchio" • 2137-4/2-R

Celebrate the little guy's 50th birthday with this golden release. (50? He must be lying!) This music got two Oscars and was central to the film's success. With "When You Wish Upon A Star," "Give A Little Whistle" and "Hi Diddle Dee Dee."





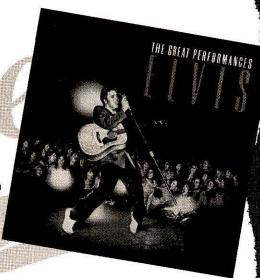
DIANA ROSS

"Silk Electric" • 4384-4/2-R Smooth, soulful pop from one of the all-time greats. Her 1982 hit album. Featuring the hit "Muscles," written and produced by Michael Jackson, plus cover art by Andy Warhol.



"ELVIS-THE GREAT PERFORMANCES"

It's here! The first recording Elvis Presley ever made: the legendary "My Happiness." Recorded on July 18, 1953 when 18-year-old Elvis was a truck driver, he paid \$3.98 (plus tax) to immortalize this priceless disc. It was intended as a gift for his mother. Now the song, featuring Elvis on guitar, is the lead cut on this new album, which also includes "Heartbreak Hotel," "Always On My Mind" "Don't Be Cruel," and more. Sonically restored, it is a companion album to the new two video set from Buena Vista Home Video, "Elvis—The Great Performances."



NIPPER'S GREATEST HITS LIST

The Best Of This dog has had plenty of practice picking hits: he has been listening to his master's voice since 1901. Now we've put together his favorites, from Mozart to Mancini, The Isley Brothers to The Pointer Sisters, Sinatra to Starship, with 20 tracks each:



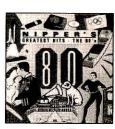
"Nipper's Greatest Hits —The 30's Volume 1" 9971-4/2-R

No Depression here. Nipper struck it rich with Happy Days Are Here "We're In The Money," "You're The Top," Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen, "Moonlight Serenade" and more. Bing Crosby, Cole Porter and Fred Astaire are a few of the highlights from this memorable decade.



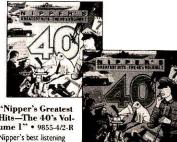
"Nipper's Greatest Hits —The 30's Volume 2" 9972-4/2-R

Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and more. Music from a decade too big to be captured in just one album, including "Stein Song," "Three Little Words," "Tea For Two," "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime!" "I Only Have Eyes For You," "Begin The Beguine," "Sing Sing Sing" and more.



NEW!

"Nipper's Greatest Hits —The 80's" • 9970-4/2-R The way it was. Nipper brought you Bruce Hornsby & The Range "The Way It Is," Starship "We Built This City," Boy Meets Girl "Waiting For A Star To Fall," Taco "Puttin' On The Ritz," Dolly Parton "9 to 5" and more.



ume 1" • 9855-4/2-R Nipper's best listening through WWII and the Big Band Era. With "Frenesi," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "Night And Day" and "Stormy Weather'



"Heartbreak Hotel,"

"Banana Boat (Day O)"

and "Catch A Falling Star."

Nipper's Greatest The 40's Volume 2" • 9864-4/2-R More hits from this great decade in music, including "Babalu," "Open The Door, Richard," and 'Sentimental Journey.'



Nipper's Greatest Hits-The 50's Volume 2 • 8467-4-R Nipper's picks include "Shout (Parts I and 2)," "Don't Be Cruel," "Love Is Strange" and "Crying In The Chapel."



8474-4/2-R This groovy disc includes "Chain Gang," "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do," "Java," "Light My Fire" and "Somebody To Love."



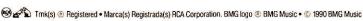
Nipper's Greatest Hits-The 60's Volume 2 • 8475-4/2-R Far out! You get "Twistin" The Night Away," "Every-body's Talkin'," "In The Year 2525" and "Suspicious Minds



Nipper's Greatest Hits—The 70's • 9684-4/2-R The decade Nipper got down and shook his booty to "Shame," 'American Woman," "Turn The Beat Around" "Rock The Boat" and more.

For a free RCA Records catalog of digital remasterpieces, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to RCA Records, 6363 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90028. (Offer ends 11-1-90.)





Circle 159 on reader service card.



TEST REPORT PIONEER CLD-3080 ★★★★

Frequency Response (dB 20 Hz to 20 kHz)	left right	+0.00/-0.14 +0.00/-0.16
S/N Ratio	left	111.54
(dB A-weighted)	right	112.15
Dynamic Range	left	97.15
(dB)	right	97.7
Maximum Deemphasis Error	left	-0.68
(in dB at 4 kHz)	right	-0.7
SMPTE IM Distortion	left	0.008
(percent)	right	0.008
Maximum L-R Phase Differential	0.8 deg.	(at 20 kHz)
Oversampling	8 times	
No. of D/A Converters	2 x 18-b	
No. of Programmable Selections		10 x 67 (File Memory)
Maximum Search Time	9 secon	ds
Audible Fast Search	Yes	
Indexing	No	
CD3	Yes	
Digital Output Remote Control	Optical	
Headphone Jack	Yes No	
Power Consumption	50 W	
Dimensions	Company of the Compan	.2 x 17.25 inches
Weight	29.3 lbs	
Suggested Price	\$1400	
Address	TO SERVICE STREET, STR	Electronics USA Inc.,
		x 1720, Long Beach, CA 90801

Manufacturer's Specifications

Frequency Response: 4 Hz-20 kHz ± 0.5 dB
Dynamic Range: 99 dB (EIAJ)
S/N Ratio: 108 dB (EIAJ)
THD: 0.003% (EIAJ)
Channel Separation: > 102 dB (EIAJ)
Line Out Level: 2 v (observed)

The CLD-3080's technical performance would be impressive even from a late-model, high-end CD player. For a LaserVision combi-player, loaded with extra machinery and potentially signal-degrading video circuits, it is nothing short of remarkable.

Dynamic range and S/N are each near-benchmark performances, while frequency response and THD (versus both frequency and level) are merely exceedingly fine. Channel separation, at > 103 dB at all frequencies, is particularly impressive given the board layout restrictions this complex design must have imposed. Only deemphasis error, nearly 1 dB, is a bit disappointing. Linearity is particularly impressive with undithered signals: near-perfect to –90 dB. With dithered test signals, errors were consistently below 3 dB right down to the noise—a fine showing by Pioneer's Direct-Linear Conversion 8x/18-bit technology.

The CLD-3080 tracked disc defects to 0.5 mm—just a bit better than par. Impact immunity was above average in the vertical plane, and very much so in the horizontal one.

—DK

solid, with a metal chassis pan reinforced by a massive, rigid, honeycomb anti-vibration crossmember. Only the wrap-around metal cover seems too light gauge for its almost 18-inch square expanse, bonging a bit with a knock. Drawer, disc loading, and track-to-track action are all wonderfully brisk for a combi-player, noticeably quicker than earlier such designs.

The rear of the Pioneer reveals two sets of analog audio output pairs on the left side. These are identical, fixed-level outs. They're intended

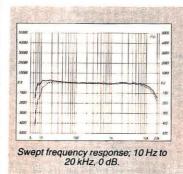
for simultaneous hook-up to both a hi-fi amp or receiver, and a monitor/ TV's direct audio inputs, permitting concurrent use of audio and video systems for different tasks (headphone listening, for instance). Dual RCA-jack video outputs are on the opposite corner, as is a single S-Video jack. This new video cable format keeps the Y/C video signal components discrete, yielding a very slight (but genuine) improvement in picture quality for those equipped with the most up-to-theminute video monitors.

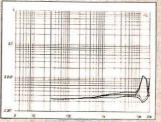
As a pure CD player, the CLD-3080 gives up very little to audio-only designs—even in light of its not inconsiderable price tag. Its ergonomics are for the most part firstrate, and disc loading and playing is only a shade less rapid and convenient as on the more sophisticated CD-only players.

The Pioneer's sonics may be described as unremarkable in the best sense of the word. Detail is outstanding, with solid, defined low end and clearly extended treble. As

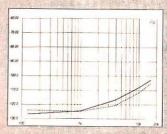
best I could determine, the CLD-3080 was entirely without audible flaw or any characteristic signature. From the video perspective, the unit produced the highest-grade video image yet seen at my house—crisp, sharp, and with superb color accuracy and intensity. As a source for multimedia entertainments—especially such all-digital (video and audio) productions as the Who's 1989 live concert laserdisc (Image ID6968CB)—the CLD-3080 is in all probability impossible to better.

At \$1400, it's well out of the impulse-purchase range. But with laser videodiscs finally gleaning the wider acceptance they've so long deserved, (see our first brace of reviews next month), this substantial tariff makes sense. Audio-only CD players of this caliber are usually found in the \$500-and-up range. So the \$900 premium for the CLD-3080's superior video, plentiful features, and multimedia integration is by no means out of line.

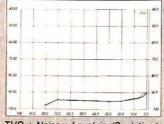




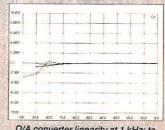
THD + Noise v. Frequency at 0 dB; both full-band (upper trace set) and with a 20 kHz "brickwall" filter in the test circuit.



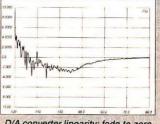
L-R and R-L channel separation from 125 Hz to 16 kHz; in dB relative to 0 dB.



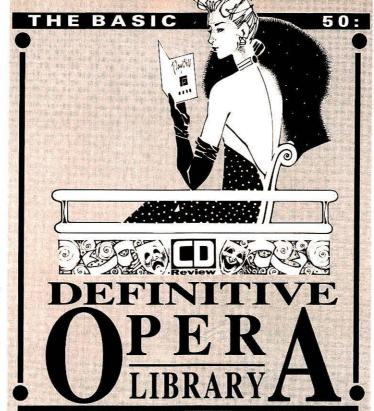
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D/A converter linearity at 1 kHz; to -90 dB with undithered test tones; -70 to -100 with dithered tones.



D/A converter linearity; fade-to-zero from -60 dB (dithered 500 Hz tone).



by Sebastian Russ

Choosing a basic opera library of 50 titles is no easy task. Do you just select the most popular operas, or do you try to provide as much of an overview as possible—ranging over the nearly four centuries that separate Monteverdi's L'Orfeo from Philip Glass' recent Akhnaten? In taking the latter course, I've included representative works from England, the U.S., Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, in addition to those countries most associated with opera. Inevitably, important works have been omitted, while scores that are inescapably tied to stage production, or that are comparatively inaccessible through a strictly aural medium because of atonal writing, have been deliberately avoided. Operas likely to lead listeners to similar works have been selected, rather than including those titles as well and reducing the variety of the library. For example, of the three great Mozart/Da Ponte collaborations, I have listed only Le Nozze di Figaro, secure in the belief that those who love it will also investigate Don Giovanni and Cosi Fan Tutte.

No title unavailable both in a good performance and in acceptably listenable sound is noted here, although neither digital nor stereophonic sound was a criterion.

- 1. Auber: La Muette de Portici Monte Carlo Philharmonic, Fulton (Angel CDC-49284). Daniel Francois Auber laid the cornerstone of French romantic grand opera with The Mute Girl of Portici—a tuneful, patriotic work that is considerably more economical than its successors. The Angel performance is the only available one, crisply conducted with a fine cast.
- 2. Beethoven: Fidelio Philharmonia Orchestra, Klemperer (Angel CDMB-69324). Beethoven's Ione opera is a paean to liberty and human rights, and a defiance of tyranny. Otto Klemperer's recording is the touchstone—taut, despite occasionally slow tempos, and magnificently sung.
- 3. Bellini: Norma London Symphony, Bonynge (London 425 488-2). All recordings of this opera are compromised by one or more of the principals, but Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne spark this midprice offering. A later Sutherland performance

(with Pavarotti) finds her resources diminished but still potent, while her colleagues are the best ever recorded.

- 4. Bellini: I Puritani London Symphony, Bonynge (London 417 588-2). The Puritans—Bellini's last opera—is a masterpiece of lyricism that requires spectacular singing from all its principals. Sutherland, Pavarotti, Capucilli, and Ghiaurov make this recording the best presently available.
- 5. Berlioz: The Trojans Royal Opera House, Davis (Philips 416 432-2). This opera is not merely grand—it is epic. So much so that Berlioz was compelled to divide it into two operas, The Siege of Troy and The Trojans at Carthage. A complete production as he conceived it did not occur until 1969, at Covent Garden. The Philips recording is a result of that production, magnificently led by Colin Davis, and with a great Aeneas in the person of Jon Vickers.
- **6. Bizet:** Carmen Vienna Philharmonic, Karajan (RCA 6199-2-RG). Bizet's down-and-dirty tale of love and death among the lowlifes was a real shock to conservative Parisian opera-goers of

- 1875. There are several different texts, but the traditional, entirely sung version is well represented by the thrilling (if decidedly un-Gallic) RCA version with Leontyne Price.
- 7. Borodin: Prince Igor Sofia Festival Orchestra, Tchakarov (Sony Classical S3K 44878). Igor was completed posthumously by Borodin's friends Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov. Although the story is more a series of pictures than a coherent drama, the music is vibrant and colorful. Sony's excellent new recording includes the dramatically important Act 3 (often omitted in performance because most of the music is by Glazunov).
- **8. Britten:** *Peter Grimes* Royal Opera House, Britten (London 414 577-2). England's preeminent contemporary operatic composer made his reputation with this grim tale of inhumanity and suicide in a fishing village. The performance, conducted by the composer, stars Peter Pears, for whom Benjamin Britten wrote most of his subsequent works. The extraordinary intermezzos known as the *Sea Interludes*, are often played as concert pieces.

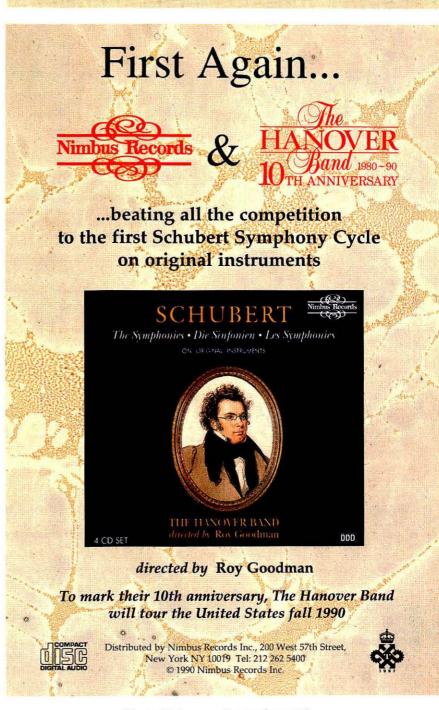
- 9. Debussy: Pelleas et Melisande Berlin Philharmonic, Karajan (Angel CDCC-49350). A true milestone in the lyric the dreamy world of Maeterlinck's play with a subtle orchestration at once rich and delicate. Herbert von Karajan's reading is perhaps a bit more dynamic than Debussy intended, but the voices are lovely, and the orchestra faithfully reproduces the swirling pastels of the composer's inspiration.
- 10. Donizetti: Lucia di Lammermoor Royal Opera House Orchestra, Bonynge (London 410 193-2). Donizetti's tragic masterpiece is best known for the great virtuosity required of the soprano, and Sutherland & Co. offer stunning vocalism. (A live Berlin performance, with Karajan and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, captured in decent sound on Verona [2709], is one of the most exciting opera performances ever.)
- 11. Donizetti: Don Pasquale Philharmonia Orchestra, Muti
- (Angel CDCB-47068). Some listeners consider this comic opera to be the composer's finest work (it was also his last successful one). Although Riccardo Muti's tempos are alternately too pushed and too relaxed, this performance is enjoyable, with Bruscantini's endearing buffoonery in the title role, and Mirella Freni a charming Norina.
- 12. Dvorak: Rusalka Czech Philharmonic, Neumann (Supraphon 10 3641). Lovers of his symphonies are often unaware of Dvorak's substantial operatic output. Rusalka—essentially the tragic tale of the Little Mermaid—is one of the most beautiful of Czech operas. The radiant performance of Gabriela Benackova is worth the price of the set, but the entire cast is of high quality, and it is lovingly conducted and well recorded.
- 13. Erkel: Hunyadi Laszlo Hungarian State Opera Orchestra, Kovacs (Hungaroton HCD 12581/3). Erkel was the Hungarian equivalent of Glinka—a creator of nationalistic opera. This tale of the unjustly persecuted and executed

- patriot Laszlo Hunyadi mingles German and French influences with the Hungarian *verbunkos* in a highly melodic score.
- 14. Gershwin: Porgy and Bess London Philharmonic, Rattle (Angel CDCC-49568). Only in recent years has George Gershwin's great American folk opera achieved its due. Of the three available recordings, this one—based on the recent Glyndebourne performances—is the most successful. However, no complete performance has ever equalled the singing on an RCA disc of excerpts (5234-2-RG) starring Leontyne Price and William Warfield.
- 15. Glass: Akhnaten Stuttgart State Opera, Davies (CBS M2K 42457). Glass' minimalist techniques work particularly well in this story of a primitive civilization—really a series of tableaux vivants relating to the heretic Pharaoh. The unusual libretto is a combination of ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, and Sumerian (it includes the Pharaoh's own prayer to Aten), with narration in English.
- 16. Glinka: A Life for the Tsar Lamoureux Orchestra, Markevitch (Angel CMS-69698). The first opera of the Russian nationalist school, this is a hugely tuneful work. The recording, severely cut, is presently the only one on CD—but it is well worth the effort to find. The cast and conducting are tops.
- 17. Gluck: Orfeo ed Euridice Royal Opera House Orchestra, Solti (London 417 410-2). The fable of Orpheus once again provides the inspiration for a milestone of operatic history. Georg Solti's recording is an exciting one, with a bravura performance by Marilyn Horne.
- 18. Gluck: Iphigenie in aulide Lyon Opera Orchestra, Gardiner (Erato 45003-2). Like Orfeo, Gluck's first opera for the Paris stage incorporated his ideals of simplicity and dramatic truth—and had a lot of enemies who tried to prevent its production. Marie Antoinette stepped in to assure the premiere, and it became a sensation. Erato's fine recording is the first and only one of the original edition.
- 19. Gounod: Faust Paris Opera, Pretre (Angel CDCC-47493). An infectiously melodic score, Faust has always been popular with the public, despite critics who decry its saccharine treatment of Goethe's great drama. No really first-rate recording exists, although this one is well sung and conducted.
- **20.** Handel: Alcina City of London Baroque Sinfonia, Hickox (Angel CDS-49771). Handel created one opera after another with great success for English audiences. Alcina is among his greatest works, and the performance here is beautifully sung.
- 21. Hasse: Cleofide Capella Coloniensis, Christie (Capriccio CD 10193/96). Italian opera seria was imitated by resident composers in other courts. Cleofide is a particularly attractive example. The performance belies the stilted reputation of the genre.
- 22. Janacek: The Cunning Little Vixen Vienna Philharmonic, Mackerras (London 417 129-2). One of Janacek's most accessible scores is The Cunning Little Vixen—a charming and touching fable populated with both human and animal characters.
- **23.** Lully: *Atys* Les Arts Florissants, Christie (Harmonia Mundi HM 901257/59). Jean-Baptiste Lully founded the French school of opera at

- the court of Louis XIV. This recording is a vital, handsomely vocalized performance of one of his great *tragedies-lyriques*.
- 24. Mascagni: Cavalleria Rusticana National Philharmonic, Levine (RCA RCD1-3091). La Scala, Mascagni (Angel CDHB-69987). Mascagni's first opera was also his most successful. This melodrama of infidelity and murder in a Sicilian village ushered in the era of Italian verismo—operas about ordinary people in "real" situations. James Levine's is one of the best recordings, combining full-throated singing with in-depth investigation of the score.
- 25. Massenet: Manon New Philharmonia, Rudel (Angel CDMC-69831). The perfumed, aristocratic world of Manon could scarcely be further from the bloodsoaked bullrings of Carmen. This knowledgeably conducted recording stars Beverly Sills and Nicolai Gedda in splendid voice.
- 26. Monteverdi: L'Orfeo Concentus musicus, Harnoncourt (Teldec 8.35020). The first true opera. Here, the composer's sketched orchestration is imaginatively and richly realized. The early music is hypnotic, and the performance excellent.
- 27. Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro Royal Opera House, Davis (Philips 426 195-2). The Marriage of Figaro is a miracle of a score and one of the most popular operas. This Philips recording boasts a superlative cast and conductor, and is available at midprice.
- 28. Mozart: Die Zauberflote Vienna Philharmonic, Solti (London 414 568-2). The Magic Flute is a singspiel—the 18th-century German equivalent of the Broadway musical, with spoken dialogue, and lots of fancy stage effects. The glorious music transcends the rather confused libretto. Georg Solti's recording is well cast and excitingly conducted.
- 29. Mussorgsky: Boris Godunov National Symphony, Rostropovich (Erato 45418-2). The quintessential Russian opera, Boris has survived in several editions. Erato's excellent performance incorporates the stark orchestration of Mussorgsky's second, "definitive" version.
- **30. Offenbach:** La Belle Helene Toulouse Orchestra, Plasson (Angel CDCB-47156). Although Offenbach did write one true opera, The Tales of Hoffmann, he is primarily famous for nearly one hundred sparkling satirical operettas. Of these, La Belle Helene is among the most delightful, and the excellent Angel performance bubbles deliciously.
- 31. Paisiello: The Barber of Seville Hungarian State Orchestra, Fischer (Hungaroton HCD 12525/26). This "prequel" to The Marriage of Figaro had its premiere in Russia! It is a lively, effervescent score that might still be in the active repertoire had not Rossini's setting of the story come along. Hungaroton's wonderful recording crackles with energy.
- 32. Puccini: La Boheme RCA Victor Orchestra, Beecham (Angel CDCB-47235). The simplicity and poignancy of this affecting drama of youthful love and death in 19th-century Paris is one of the best-loved of all operas, and the most popular work of the most important Italian master after Verdi. Thomas Beecham's monaural recording has perhaps the finest cast of singers ever, with the warmly lyrical Victoria De Los Angeles as Mimi and the ardent, silver-voiced Rodolfo of Jussi Bjoerling.

- 33. Puccini: Tosca La Scala, De Sabata (Angel CDCB-47174). This violent melodrama was dismissed by one critic as a "shabby little shocker," but it remains one of the most popular operas. There has never been any real competition for this mono recording. It is an utterly compelling performance, with searing portrayals of Tosca and Scarpia by Maria Callas and Tito Gobbi. Victor De Sabata conducts with unique intensity, and the supporting characters are finely etched. One of the all-time greatest opera recordings.
- 34. Purcell: The Fairy Queen Les Arts Florissants, Christie (Harmonia Mundi HMC 901308/9). The English preferred masques (plays with elaborate, highly developed musical interludes that had little or nothing to do with the main story) to entirely sung dramas. This one is a masterpiece, and William Christie and his artists do it full justice.
- 35. Rimsky-Korsakov: Snow Maiden, Angelov (Fidelio 8806/8). Many of Rimsky's operas are based upon exotic fairy tales, and Snow Maiden is one of his loveliest scores. This Bulgarian cast offers a fine performance—the only one on CD.
- 36. Rossini: Semiramide London Symphony, Bonynge (London 425 481-2). One of the most floridly impressive of Italian opere serie—and considered Rossini's magnum opus in the genre. Richard Bonynge's text suffers from rearrangement, and the supporting singers predate today's renaissance of Rossini singing. But the vocalism of Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne wouldn't be out of place in the most golden of eras.
- 37. Rossini: William Tell Royal Philharmonic, Gardelli (Angel CMS-69951). Rossini's last work—the only entirely new opera he composed for Paris—is vast. There are inflammatory choruses and ensembles, lovely pastoral themes, delicious ballets, and fiendishly difficult writing for the soloists, particularly the tenor. Angel's recording is the only one in the original French; Gedda, Caballe, and Bacquier are all in magnificent voice, and Lamberto Gardelli propels the score along with real energy.
- 38. Rossini: The Barber of Seville Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Marriner (Philips 411 058-2). Rossini's brilliant setting of the Beaumarchais comedy obliterated Paisiello's version from the repertoire. The performances on this recording are perhaps the best vocalized of all.
- **39.** Smetana: The Bartered Bride Czech Philharmonic, Kosler (Supraphon 10 3511). Smetana composed eight operas, of which the comic folk opera The Bartered Bride is deservedly the most popular. This performance (the only one available in Czech) is characterized by high spirits and fine singing from Gabriela Benackova and Peter Dvorsky as the two lovers.
- **40. R. Strauss:** Salome London Symphony, Leinsdorf (RCA 6644-2-RG). Wagner's most successful successor was Richard Strauss. Salome is a lurid and erotic melodrama that perfectly mirrors the decadence of Wilde's play. RCA's recording boasts the powerful but girlish Salome of Montserrat Caballe in her prime, and an excellent supporting cast that really sing their roles.
- 41. R. Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier Philharmonia, Karajan (Angel CDCC-49354). Strauss fuses the humanity of Mozart with the gaiety of Viennese operetta. Herbert von Karajan's Angel recording features the aristocratic Feldmarschallin of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and the wonderful Octavian of the young Christa Ludwig.

- 42. Tchaikovsky: Eugen Onegin Bolshoi Opera Orchestra, Ermler (Melodiya MCD 115). This "Lyric Scene in Three Acts" is the composer's most deeply human opera, although the intermitently effective drama has limited its popularity. The Bolshoi performance from the 1970s is authentic in flavor and has a fine cast.
- 43. Verdi: Rigoletto Italiana Opera Orchestra, Solti (RCA 6506-2-RG). One of the most tuneful and popular operas ever. RCA's performance remains the best sung, including Anna Moffo in her prime as the warmest and most youthful of Gildas.
- 44. Verdi: Nabucco Vienna State Opera Orchestra, Gardelli (London 417 407-2). It wasn't until Verdi's third opera, Nabucco, that he enjoyed his first big success. Lamberto Gardelli gives it an exciting reading, aided by the splendid, impassioned singing of the 22-year old Elena Souliotis (roles like this quickly destroyed her voice), and the in-depth characterization of Nabucco by Tito Gobbi.
- **45. Verdi:** Aida New Philharmonia, Muti (Angel CDCC-47271). One of the grandest of grand operas, best known for its spectacular "Triumphal Scene," it is nonetheless an extremely intimate drama about three people. The Riccardo Muti recording features the best singing of currently available versions.
- 46. Verdi: Falstaff Philharmonia, Karajan (Angel CDCB-49668). Verdi's last stage work is one of the greatest achievements in lyric comedy. Herbert von Karajan's autumnal reading captures the brilliant portrayal of Tito Gobbi as Falstaff.
- 47. Wagner: Tristan und Isolde Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Bohm (Deutsche Grammophon 419 889-2). The opening chords alone were a profound influence on subsequent music. The score in its entirety is a penetrating investigation of tragic love. Karl Bohm fully understands the erotic implications of the music, and this live performance from Bayreuth is enormously exciting—urgently conducted and gloriously sung.
- 48. Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg Deutsche Opera Berlin, Jochum (Deutsche Grammophon 415 278-2). It's always a surprise that Wagner could have written a romantic comedy—and *The Mastersingers* is precisely that. The opera is genuinely *funny*. Eugen Jochum's performance achieves this in spaces and also has the benefit of Placido Domingo's gorgeously sung Walther.
- 49. Wagner: Der Ring des Niebelungen Vienna Philharmonic, Solti (London 414 100-2). Yes, I know I'm cheating a little by including all four operas of the Ring cycle under their collective heading. But it is a unified work—the most ambitious ever composed for the lyric stage—and deserves to be examined patiently and in its entirety. Although London's sound is beginning to show its age, it's the best overall performance, with the kind of big voices the work needs. Despite some smaller voices, James Levine's developing Ring on DG seems poised to offer an effective challenge.
- 50. Weber: Der Freischutz Staatskapelle Dresden, Kleiber (Deutsche Grammophon 415 432-2). The Freeshooter is the first great nationalistic, romantic German opera. Although there is no completely satisfactory recording on CD, DG's offering gives an excellent and enjoyable idea of the work. It lacks only the extraordinary voices necessary to do it full justice. ■



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R E V I E W S



Best CD of the Wonth WILLIAM CONCERTOS NOS. 20-27 BLAUF RESOLVENT CONTROL FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY OF THE PRIVATE PROPERTY OF TH

W.A. Mozart: Concerto No. 20 for Piano in D Minor K 466; No. 21 in C Major K 467; No. 22 in E-flat Major K 482; No. 23 in A Major K 488; No. 24 in C Minor K 491; No. 25 in C Major K 503; No. 26 in D Major K 537 ("Coronation"); No. 27 in B-flat Major K 595

Malcolm Bilson (fortepiano) English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner Archiv 427 846-2 (DDD) 1986–88 (90) Disc time: 239:43 (4 discs)

Mozart's piano concertos must be the most embracing body of music ever produced by a single composer. Symphonic in their structure and proportions, as personal as any chamber music, essentially operatic in their wordless flights of comedy and tragedy, they distill the singular invention, humanity, and spiritual light that suffuse the music of Mozart.

The last eight concertos—the boxful offered here—are like so many children (or perhaps cherubim). Each has its own character, its own piquant charm, its own transcendent beauty. Such characterization, served by supreme technique and stylistic mastery, marks these performances as jewels of the catalog.

Recorded in four pairs over a period of three years, all in a single London venue (St. John's, Smith Square), the series is consistent not only in its musical perspective but in its natural balance between keyboard and orchestra. In keeping with late-18th-century instrumentation, expertly applied in the hands of John Eliot Gardiner's little troupe, Malcolm Bilson uses a fortepiano. Although, generally speaking, this early stage of the modern piano provided both a narrower range and lighter voice than the instruments that were to come under Beethoven's hands in the next decades, it's

evident that Bilson's is a pretty hefty model, with a big voice and rich tone well suited to these festive and dramatic concertos.

Specifically in the piano concertos, Mozart prided himself on writing music that offered something for both the connoisseur and the casual listener. That may be said as well for what Bilson achieves throughout this series. Since Mozart left little in the way of cadenzas, Bilson-departing from the standard practice of using Beethoven's or Brahms' or someone's-creates his own. And it's only because we know Mozart didn't write them that we don't assume he did. Yet, as Mozart might have done, Bilson isn't afraid to borrow a good idea. In the opening movement of the C Minor Concerto (K 491), he greatly heightens the effect of his own cadenza by inserting a stern fugal passage that turns out to be the work of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, a pupil of Mozart's.

Nor is that the sum of Bilson's invention. In concertos such as the *D Major* (*K* 503) and *B-flat Major* (*K* 537), for which Mozart wrote down only the barest sketches of a left-hand part, Bilson dumps the usually heard filler supplied by early publishers and others in favor of his own stylish underpinnings. However, all of this only serves the higher purpose of musical (I want to say theatrical) expression. And therein lies the ultimate, boundless reward of this collaboration between Bilson—a pianist of impeccable taste—and Gardiner—a conductor who well might be presiding over a stageful of voices from an opera pit.

Besides plumbing the wondrous depths of less commonly programmed concertos, such as the *E-flat Major (K 482)*, with its exuberant

How They Rate

CDR's PERFORMANCE ratings factor in the entire musical package—the playing, the music, the lyrics (if applicable), and the arrangements. SOUND QUALITY ratings take into account the producing and engineering as well as such variables as remastering and overall ambiance.

The following table explains the numerical ratings.

- 1-2-Poor
- 3-4-Below average
 - 5—Average
- 6-7—Above average; strengths overshadow flaws
- 8-9-Exceptional; highly recommended
 - 10—Superior; qualities of unusual merit

fanfares and touching songfulness, Bilson and Gardiner offer new energy—hardly less than rebirth—to the popular *C Major (K 467)*, whose association with the film *Elvira Madigan* has inspired many an insipid, maudlin performance.

Not enough can be said for the pliant ensemble or individual efforts of the English Baroque Soloists. Likewise, the recording team has managed to keep keyboard and orchestra in a plausible relationship without magnifying the one or blanketing the other. There must be a category in which this reissue set can qualify for album of the year. Musically and sonically, it sets the standard for the '90s.

—Lawrence B. Johnson



Bartok: Quartets Nos. 1-6 for Strings

Takacs Quartet

Hungaroton HCD 12502/04 (DDD) (84) Disc time: 153:89 (3 discs)

Following publication of our survey of Bartok string quartets last May, we received a call from the U.S. distributor of Hungaroton recordings. "Why didn't you include ours?" he asked, obviously upset. It seems there had been some confusion when we originally tried to obtain the set for review, so we went ahead with what at the time were the four newest recordings—on Deutsche Grammophon, Angel, ASV, and Chandos.

The clear winner among those releases was the Emerson Quartet on DG. This version from Hungaroton was the first digital recording of the Bartok quartets (in the early 1980s), a fact that would make some listeners skeptical of the sound quality. Others would automatically prefer to buy the better known recording—the Emerson, after all, won a Grammy this year for its performance.

JAMES LEVINE THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

The Ring

This Deutsche Grammophon cycle continues with the release of Das Rheingold.



Siegfried and Götterdämmerung are in preparation for future release.

CLASSICA<u>L</u>

I must admit to a bit of skepticism myself but not because of any suspected problems with the sound. Many reference-quality digital recordings were made even in the late '70s. But my question was, "If this recording is so good, why, after six years on the market, isn't it better known?" (And besides, I'm always skeptical of discs I haven't heard.)

Most of my doubts vanished while listening to the First Quartet. The lines of the opening movement are patiently, sensuously drawn-a deliberate, and absolutely right exploitation of the work's romanticism that carries to the last note of the final movement. Here, and consistently throughout the six quartets, the Takacs attends to every expressive detail indicated by the composer. If you've ever looked carefully at a Bartok score (or listened to some of the other quartet performances of this same music), you know what a challenging task that is. The Takacs-every bit as well as the Emerson-also manages to get inside the unique personality of each quartet, a distinction that becomes most clear if you listen to the entire set at one sitting.

The Fourth Quartet is another standout. First comes an aggressive "Allegro," then a frantic "Prestissimo," followed by a flawless transition to the airy, vibratoless chords accompanying the cello solo, which, in keeping with the composer's directions, is as espressivo as you're ever going to hear.

The pizzicato movement is a masterpiece of interpretive and technical skill—as is the final "Allegro molto."

If the preceding performances aren't enough to convince you about the abilities of this ensemble, the *Fifth Quartet* will erase all questions. This is quartet playing at its finest; four musicians functioning as one, at the top of their form.

In my earlier review, I mentioned the overriding factor that distinguished the Emerson from the other Bartok performers: an "unwavering cohesive interpretive view from the first quartet to the last." That same observation must be applied to the Takacs Quartet's readings. Here we have not just an alternate choice, but an excellent first choice. And should we be surprised? After all, these are Hungarians performing music that draws much of its life and being from Hungary itself.

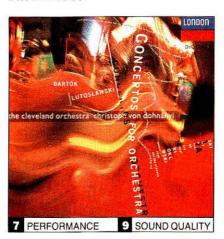
And what about the early 1980s digital sound? Compared to the more closely miked Emerson recording, this one has a softer edge—an aesthetic choice that, to my ears, slightly diminishes the music's gritty essence, which I believe Bartok's writing demands. Many listeners—especially those who consider the DG recording to reveal too much of the scratch of bows and sniffs of the players—will prefer Hungaroton's more distant but just as well balanced perspective. —David Vernier

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Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra; Miraculous Mandarin Suite Berlin Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta Sony Classical SK 45748 (DDD) 1987/89 (90) Disc time: 55:50



Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra Lutoslawski: Concerto for Orchestra Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnanyi London 425 694-2 (DDD) 1988/89 (90) Disc time: 65:34

As it was ingeniously and mercilessly designed to do when Serge Koussevitzky commissioned the work for the Boston Symphony in 1943, Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra stands as a litmus test of skills-individual and collective-of any orchestra with pretensions of virtuosity. This music-so challenging to the fingers and so exhilarating to the ear-also measures the means of conductors. Every young maestro seeks the first opportunity to prove himself by it, and every veteran who has reached the world stage can cite one or more recordings of the Bartok Concerto among his claims to fame. Sometimes, it's a dubious credit, especially when each new recording must stand comparison with the arm's length list of worthies that now exist on CD.

For both the richness of its ideas and its sound, Zubin Mehta's recording with the Berlin Philharmonic cuts the mustard as a performance that bears repeated hearings. Christoph von Dohnanyi's outing with the Cleveland Orchestra doesn't merit the same recommendation. The basic difference be-

tween the two is line: While Mehta never allows the brilliance of the Berliners to obscure Bartok's big picture, Dohnanyi's preoccupation with detail all but banishes perspective. That tendency to worry the musical moment gets completely out of hand in the second movement "Game of the Couples," where Dohnanyi explodes every fleeting gesture into an event. By contrast, Mehta's fluid approach blends all the passing marvels of the Berlin Philharmonic into a single musical stream.

Perhaps it's Dohnanyi's determination to make a statement about the Bartok that's his undoing. When he turns to Witold Lutoslawski's less-traveled *Concerto for Orchestra*, the musical gestures flow unselfconsciously to far more compelling effect.

Written a decade after Bartok's, the Lutoslawski Concerto springs from folk roots—and from the progressive composer's suddenly desperate need to placate the Stalinist arbiters of socialist taste. Of a cluster of folkloric works Lutoslawski produced in those frightful times, the Concerto for Orchestra stands out as the most ingenious. It surely is the single most popular piece by a great composer whose fame is still spreading. Here, the Clevelanders capture the music's vibrant colors as well as its rhythmic energy and affirmative spirit.

Mehta likewise rounds off his program in winning fashion, with a dramatically charged account of Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* ballet suite. Like the *Concerto*, the sensuous *Mandarin* music revels in the Berlin Philharmonic's matchless sound, which the Sony Classical crew brings home with startling naturalism.

—Lawrence B. Johnson

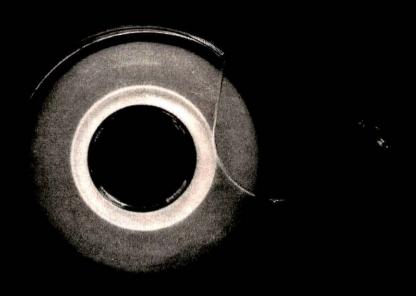


Stravinsky: The Firebird (complete original 1910 version); Jeu de Cartes

Philharmonia Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen CBS MK 44917 (DDD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 68:07

No matter how you approach this recording, it's a blue-ribbon winner. From a musical standpoint, the young Finnish conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen—newly invested as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic—offers up a faithfully theatrical *Firebird* and tops that off with a *Jeu de Cartes* of brittle, sparkling humor. For its part, the Philharmonia Orchestra illuminates both the flamboyant, romantic *Firebird* and the wry, neo-classic *Jeu* with equal parts of stylistic awareness, virtuosity, and affection. Sonically, the whole pro-

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CLASSICAL

duction glories in lifelike stereo staging and a warm scheme of instrumental colors. Added to this is CBS' *Firebird* roadmap, provided in the CD booklet: The entire ballet is subdivided into 22 titled tracks to keep you abreast of the nonstop action.

All told, it's one of the most satisfying hours I've spent in some time. Salonen's Firebird falls little short of operatic in its elastic lyricism. It's a tapestry aglitter with sensitive characterization spun out by solo winds against constantly shifting orchestral backdrops. The conductor's flexible yet sure-handed rhythmic command underscores the intoxicating effects Stravinsky gleaned from Rimsky-Korsakov on the one hand and Debussy on the other.

To the scherzo of princesses at play with the golden apples, Salonen brings an irrepressible vitality that gives place—in the sudden appearance of the heavy-hearted prince to a languorous, magical piling up of solo wind and string voices. The famous infernal dance of Kashchei, the moment we all wait for in the suite, only becomes more powerful and thrilling in its original context.

Later in life, the composer grumped about the "wastefully large" orchestra he required for *Firebird*. What the curmudgeon didn't say was that, great as his sonorous resources were, he didn't squander the least tint. To experience the ballet complete in such a performance is to come away convinced that there isn't a jot of it that's expendable—and to suspect that the oft-programmed and -recorded suite will never suffice again.

But we can't overlook Jeu de Cartes here. Salonen imbues this "ballet in three deals" (as Stravinsky subtitled his 1937 essay) with a drollery that borders on inebriation. Clean-limbed, witty, unmistakable in its caricature, the Philharmonia's performance exudes an unfaltering elan; even in its most madcap flights the ensemble remains fully under control. No mere encore or filler, this Jeu is a delight unto itself.

-Lawrence B. Johnson

8 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

American Soviet Youth Orchestra 1988 Tour

Copland: Fanfare for the Common Man; Appalachian Spring; Ives: "Decoration Day" from Holidays Symphony; Larsen: Collage—Boogie; Prokofiev: Excerpts from Romeo and Juliet; Denisov: Bells in the Fog

American Soviet Youth Orchestra, Zubin Mehta, Dmitri Kitayenko Comin CMN 0888-001 (DDD) 1988 (89) Disc time: 75:28

The American Soviet Youth Orchestra was organized in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of the first U.S./U.S.S.R. cultural exchange. The orchestra's 1988 tour included performances in both countries and resulted in this recording. You'll be impressed by the high level of playing by the 110 young (ages 17–23) American and Soviet musicians.

The varied program, recorded live during their concerts, may not make for a disc you'd

F Y I "Susanna"



Handel has a way of surprising modern audiences, and one of the biggest surprises will appear this month. The occasion is the long-awaited release of conductor Nicholas McGegan's new recording of Susanna (Harmonia Mundi USA 907030/32). Joining him are his Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and a distinguished cast of soloists, including soprano Lorraine Hunt, counter-tenor Drew Minter, and bass David Thomas.

Based on an apocryphal addition to the Book of Daniel, this biblical thriller tells of a beautiful woman who so inflames her judges with lust (graphically depicted on the disc's cover in a 17th century work by Artemesia Gentileschi) that they falsely accuse her of adultery. The meeting of Susanna and the Elders inspired some of Handel's most haunting vocal music. The choral outbursts of "Susanna is guilty, Susanna must bleed" is a shocking feat of cruelty displayed in music.

Young Daniel's detective work in revealing that the witnesses are lying turns Susanna into a true baroque mystery. The woman's vindication through Daniel's wisdom finds Handel at his most heroic. Elsewhere the melodies come close enough to English folk song to reveal the influence of theatrical composer Thomas Arne, and throughout the oratorio there is a transparency of scoring that Handel seldom surpassed.

The stellar recording, fast-paced enough for a good whodunit, is complete—perhaps even more complete than Handel himself ever had a chance to hear. The aria for Susanna's father, "Peace Crown'd with Roses," which Handel replaced with a brief recitative, is included in Harmonia Mundi's version. But Nicholas McGegan is not obsessed with all this scholarly attention to detail. He knows the secret of the lasting popularity of Handel's music: "It's great fun," he insists.

Fun is definitely in McGegan's mind. "What I absolutely despise is blandness in all forms," he says. "This may sound surprising, considering I was raised on English food. But there you have it."

Short and charming and quick, the 40-

year-old conductor smiles when mention is made of the dull academic image that many groups specializing in early music have had until recently.

"Believe me, I know what you mean," he says. "After all, I used to play in The Academy of Ancient Music. I played the flute in those recordings of the complete Mozart symphonies, and I sometimes think there was no reason to play some of those scores except that they were complete. Nothing was being said."

The infamous recordings in question, conducted by McGegan's Cambridge schoolmate Christopher Hogwood, have not been received as well as McGegan's own growing discography. As the house star of Harmonia Mundi USA, he records mainly in California with his own Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, as well as for Hungaroton with the celebrated Capella Savaria. Like Sir Neville Marriner, another great conductor once thought of strictly as a baroque specialist, McGegan has delved into the music of Beethoven and Schubert, of Stravinsky and Strauss.

"And I would love to do Offenbach and more Offenbach," he says. Still, Handel has a strong claim on his affection. Susanna is only the latest Handelian adventure of his Berkeley band. He will record Messiah next—taking full advantage of the digital medium.

"We're going to do something interesting with that one," says McGegan, adding that plans are to use compact disc technology in such a way that the listener at home will be able to program either Handel's original Dublin version or the later London Foundlings' Hospital revision, "which represents Handel's final thoughts on the score."

As for the immediate future, we'll soon see the Corelli Concerti Grossi Op. 6 Nos. 7-12, companion to the critically acclaimed earlier volume that contained Concertos 1-6.

—Octavio Roca

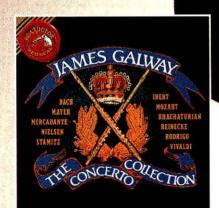


He has made the flute popular throughout the world. Here are two good



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Unfortunately, Franz Schmidt (1874-1939)

want to listen to straight through more than once, but individually the works bear repeated hearings. Edison Denisov's Bells in the Fog, an eerie, atmospheric blend of swirling color, and Libby Larsen's rambunctious Collage: Boogie were commissioned by the orchestra and are premiered on this disc.

If you don't yet own Copland's Appalachian Spring, consider this one, conducted by a Soviet with as much feeling and insight as any American. My only complaint is that in the faster sections the ensemble frays a bit around the edges, and syncopation isn't always exploited as it should be.

The concert hall acoustic is appropriate, and thankfully, there is no hint of artificial highlighting of soloists or sections of the orchestra. Audience noise is minimal.

A six-week 22-concert 1990 tour was just completed. Plans are to produce one to three new CDs from these performances, featuring works of Barber, Sibelius, Shostakovich, Mussorgsky, Schwantner, and Borodin, conducted by American Leonard Slatkin and Soviets Leonard Nikolayev and Alexander Lazarev. Discs are available from Music for a Better World-the distributors of the CD-by calling 800-441-3636. -David Vernier

3 PERFORMANCE

8 SOUND QUALITY

Franz Schmidt: Symphony No. 2 in E-flat Major

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Jarvi Chandos CHAN 8779 (DDD) 1989 (89) Disc time: 46:55

seems to have gotten lost among the extraordinary Viennese composers who lived between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. Born in the Austro-Hungarian city of Pressburg (now Bratislava in Czechoslovakia), Schmidt moved to Vienna with his family when he was 14 years old. He studied counterpoint with Bruckner at the conservatory and played cello in the Vienna Court Opera Orchestra under Mahler. Schoenberg was an exact contemporary and Webern was nine years younger.

Schmidt, though perhaps not of the same caliber as his fellow Vienna-dweller Alexander Zemlinsky, deserves all the attention he can get. His works, including four symphonies and the colossal oratorio Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln, is sometimes profound, sometimes turgid, sometimes unwieldy. Symphony No. 2 has the brass blocks of Bruckner, the lushness of Strauss, and the intensity of Mahler, yet maintains its own distinctive stamp.

Its three-movement structure is unusualfirst movement; second movement theme and variations with a scherzo and trio; and a final variation serving as a last movement. The diffuse opening section, with its heavy and disjointed brass interludes, is the least successful of the three movements. The theme and variations includes an amazing spectrum of moods and orchestral colors. Much of the symphony is characterized by sudden shifts between harmonically disturbing, even eerie passages and sections of comfortable harmony.

Jarvi lets the Chicago brass roam at will. It's the right music-and the right orchestra-for this kind of playing. Jarvi is a confident, driving force behind the superb ensemble, evoking creamy string passages and well-shaped lines. The recording was made from four live performances at Chicago's Orchestra Hall and has the spatial depth necessary to present this large-scale work to full advantage.

-Daniel Wakin

7 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Scott Joplin: His Greatest Hits Richard Zimmerman (piano) Legacy CD 316 (AAD) 1974 (90) Disc time: 68:00

This is a reissue of selections from a 1974 complete Joplin LP set. Dick Zimmerman, who organizes the annual Sedalia, MO, Ragtime Festival, is a fine traditional ragtime player-so you'll want this CD in your ragtime collection. I found it in Tower Records for under \$9, definitely a bargain at

Nice stuff too: "The Entertainer," "Maple Leaf," "Swipsey," "Sunflower," "Easy Winners," "Ragtime Dance," "Cascades, "Bethena," "Gladiolus," "Heliotrope," "Fig Leaf," "Pineapple," "Solace," "Euphonic Sounds," "Stoptime," and "Joplin's New Rag"-all 16 of 'em!

The only bummer is the single page el cheapo liner notes. Tsk Tsk.

-Wayne Green

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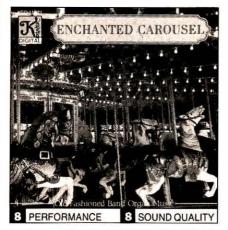








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Enchanted Carousel—Old Fashioned Band **Organ Music**

Klavier KCD-11021 (DDD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 66:00

Of course, if you had an over-deprived childhood and missed out on merrygo-rounds, you may not get the kick out of this music that I do. Only the horses which went up and down were for red-blooded kids. And you know, the world being a more innocent place then, it never occurred to me to sneak a ring into my pocket. No, I dutifully threw them back into the basket at the end of the ride.

You'll enjoy the music too: "Put Another Nickle in the Nickelodeon," "76 Trom-

bones," "Colonel Bogey," "Cabaret," "Those Were the Days," "Beer Barrel "Those Were the Days," Polka" - stuff like that.

If you're not a carousel music fanatic, maybe it's time to get yourself to an amusement park and make up for a misspent childhood. Then you can work up some nice fresh shortterm nostalgia. Let's be reasonable about this-you aren't going to fight me on building an interesting and eclectic CD collection, are you? One thing to guard against-don't get too carried away or you'll find yourself watching for used carousel band organs to refurbish. Imagine having your own-wow!

-Wayne Green

8 PERFORMANCE

7 SOUND QUALITY

Clara Schumann: Piano Trio in G Minor Op. 17

Fanny Mendelssohn: Piano Trio in D Major Op. 11

Dartington Piano Trio Hyperion CDA 66331 (DDD) 1988 (89) Disc time: 56:17

What but the engine of genius could have driven Fanny Mendelssohn to write her exquisite Piano Trio in D Major? Suppressed and discouraged by her father and pushed aside (does it matter how gently?) for most of her life by her famous younger brother Felix, she nonetheless persisted in her compositional and performing activities. Much of her work remains in archives, but those few pieces that have seen the light of day suggest the promise

of great treasure for the adventurous artist, publisher, or recording executive who pursues the unpublished output of Fanny Mendelssohn.

The Piano Trio opens with a turbulent "Allegro molto vivace" that spins and turns in dark torture despite its declared key of D major. The piano leads, for sure, but cello and violin each have their turns in the spotlight. The movement ends as it begins, with a miniature whirlwind on the piano, precursor and denouement to the storm.

Then comes the slow movement with a crescendo from a simple, gently rising statement to a bittersweet development in which the three instruments spiral about each other in slowly changing orbits. No fortissimos here, no overstated drama; the prevailing nervous calm electrifies the air.

Because her talents were nurtured rather than actively suppressed, Clara Schumann was quite a different case. Like all women of her time she was subordinated to her male associates. But she grew up as an active student and performer of music, and her adult life was filled as much as possible with composition and performance.

Schumann's skill at melodic development bolsters the heavyweight opening movement of her Piano Trio, and her love for understated harmony floods the "Andante" with simple violin/cello duets over a lilting piano line. Sometimes the simplest harmonic structure can be the most beautiful, especially when this simplicity is juxtaposed with the ambiguous

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complexities of the final movement, which bears the listener along on a swirling stream of evolving structure. We never quite know what is coming next, but the feeling is one of wonder rather than of frustration.

The players of the Dartington Trio are faultless, maybe even too clean and pretty. There is passion here, but no melodrama. The atmosphere is hot, but no one is panting. Only in the fast movements of the Mendelssohn does the ensemble generate any smoke. Although I would prefer a little more sweat, a little more hard breathing, the Dartington's refined approach has a strong argument in its favor. On the fourth or fifth listening I will be concentrating on the music, rather than on a bit of exaggerated bowing that may have been spontaneous at the time of the performance yet grows tiresome on repetition.

By deemphasizing the individual musicians and focusing our attention instead on Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn, the Dartington Trio enhances the composer's art at the expense of the very particular and ephemeral responses of the interpreters. The exchange is certainly fair. Whether it is worthwhile will be a matter of personal taste. (For a more emotionally gripping reading with some technical peccadilloes, try Veronica Jochum, Joseph Silverstein, and Colin Carr on Pro Arte CDD 395.)

The piano sits dead center on the sound stage, with the strings mixed tightly to the left and right. Don't try to establish a realistic sonic image. The perspective is distant, but the instruments are at arm's length. One unfortunate and unnecessary result of the close mik-

ing: Some of the fortissimo keyboard passages are distorted and downright painful.

—Tom Vernier

8 PERFORMANCE

6 SOUND QUALITY

Purcell: Sonata No. 1 in D Major Stanley: Trumpet Voluntary Op. 6 No. 5

Clarke: Suite in D Major Corelli: Sonata in D Major

Baldassare: Sonata No. 1 in F Major Torelli: Sonata a Cinque in D Major G 1

Stephen Burns (trumpet)

Musicmasters MMCD 60074K (AAD) 1984 (88)

Disc time: 43:03

changes.

10 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Telemann: Concerto in D Major for 3 Trumpets and 2 Oboes; in D Major for Trumpet; in E-flat Major for 2 Trumpets; in D Major for Trumpet and 2 Oboes

Hakan Hardenberger, Michael Laird, William Houghton (trumpet); Celia Nicklin, Tess Miller (oboe); Graham Sheen (bassoon); John Constable (harpsichord) Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Iona Brown

Philips 420 954-2 (DDD) 1987 (88) Disc time: 54:00

Stephen Burns graces the Musicmasters disc with truly flawless trumpet playing. The recording process is kind to his flashy tone, and he seems to delight in displaying his athletic range and his easy control of subtle dynamic

On the program is a Purcell sonata with an

CLASSICAL

"Adagio" of calm and gentle beauty, and a spirited, hearty sonata credited to Corelli. The little piece by Baldassare is new to me and delightful, and Torelli's *Sonata a cinque* makes an exciting conclusion to this successful recital.

Unfortunately, the unnamed accompanying ensemble is not as expert as Burns. The lower strings are fine, for the most part, but the first violin is in and out of tune throughout the Purcell and occasionally during the other pieces. In his dual roles of soloist and conductor, Burns fails to convey his own enthusiasm to his nine-member orchestra of young artists.

The sound is quiet analog, dull in the lower frequencies.

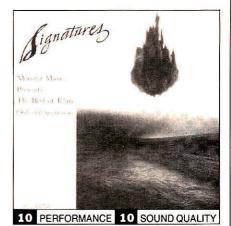
Hakan Hardenberger's disc of Telemann concertos allays some misgivings I had about one of his earlier recordings. Here, Hardenberger's tone has pleasant, soft corners that serve the clarity of Telemann's lines without succumbing to exaggerations in articulation. He moves effortlessly in the heights, as though he could play above the staff for hours.

The Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields snaps along under the direction of Iona Brown. Clearly manifesting their enjoyment of this music, they form a tight foundation for Hardenberger's shining solo work. Oboists Celia Nicklin and Tess Miller nearly steal the spotlight with some expressive and sweet solos of their own.

Telemann's voluminous output makes him an easy target for those who would question the depth of his compositions, yet these concertos are inventive enough to entertain and provoke the listener again and again.

The stereo image is clear and free of obvious manipulation, but why are the strings set so far back, and why are the timpani so muffled in the first track?

—Tom Vernier



Signatures—The Best of Telarc (Orchestral Spectaculars)

Various orchestras and conductors Monster Music/Telarc 107388 (DDD) (90) Disc time: 65:00

This is a sampler of Telarc's classical music CDs, released by the Monster Cable people. It's eclectic, though all classical. There's some opera, some movie music, ballet, requiems, and some symphonic material. Most of the selections should be familar to classical music lovers.

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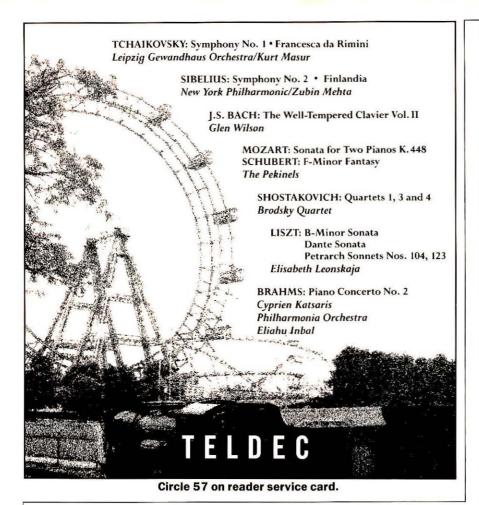
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Alas, listening to two or three minutes of music pulled out of a symphony is like eating one peanut. However, for people who are not familiar with the music and would like to get an idea of what it's like, this is a spread of nice hors d'oeuvres.

To be specific, there's Copland's Fanfare, Khachaturian's Sabre Dance, segments from Rodgers' Victory at Sea, Wagner's Ring, Elgar's Enigma, Hindemith's Metamorphosis, Berlioz's La Marseillaise, Verdi's Requiem, and so on. All good stuff—some great. But some of this, like the requiems, may be heavy going for the classical music newcomer.

-Wayne Green

8 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

W.A. Mozart: Symphony No. 40 in G Minor K 550; Symphony No. 41 in C Major K 551 ("Jupiter") Sinfonia Varsovia, Yehudi Menuhin Virgin 91082-2 (DDD) 1989 (90)

Disc time: 57:40

Yehudi Menuhin's mid-sized yet muscular treatment of Mozart's last symphonies balances the precision required by the multiple, often fugal, orchestral voices with the concentrated power demanded by these summary symphonic statements.

Listen to the introductory eighth notes of No. 40. Violas alone launch this grand tragedy, assisted only by a single accent from the lower strings. Many recordings blur this opening, focusing instead on the familiar the-

matic figure that immediately follows in the violins. Menuhin and the Virgin audio team preserve each leaping note of the viola line, and they never relinquish this attention to detail.

This is no delicate, picky performance, however. The *G Minor* is at once supple, robust, and spirited, spiced with dark humor and black joy. Menuhin's tempo in the first movement is comfortably quick, albeit not quite at Franz Bruggen's stimulating pace on Philips (416 329-2)—a live, original instruments version that complements rather than competes with the present reading. The second movement almost bogs down, not because it is too slow, but because it lacks the necessary sustaining motivation. Menuhin wisely declines the repeats.

High energy returns in a desperate, restless "Menuetto." The final movement drives home the melancholy of G minor; the clouds refuse to disperse. Here the agility of a smaller orchestra pays off—in the nimble dance of the violins and in the unmuffled cries of the woodwinds. Another double bass and an additional cello or two would make a perfect blend.

Menuhin's "Jupiter" is light in texture and truly vivace in the opening "Allegro." Some crucial drama is lost in the contrasting statements of the minuet. Mozart asks for a leap from piano to forte. Menuhin gives us piano to a weak mezzo-forte. I look for more punch from the timpani in this section as well. The furious, contrapuntal flow of the final movement works much better.

The acoustics of the Concert Hall in Warsaw

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could not be finer, and the engineers have rendered a pleasingly natural sound picture. No false enhancements, just the comfortable blend of a chamber orchestra at work. It's really nice to hear the winds balanced with the strings this way, instead of popping into exaggerated focus at every solo, an all too popular recording technique.

—Tom Vernier



3 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Beethoven: Serenade in D Major for Flute, Violin, and Viola Op. 25; Sonata in B-flat Major; Serenade in D Major Op. 8 (arr. for flute and piano by Theobald Boehm)

James Galway (flute); Joseph Swensen (violin); Paul Neubauer (viola); Phillip Moll (piano)

RCA 7756-2-RC (DDD) 1987/88 (90) Disc time: 66:45

One of the outstanding attributes of Beethoven's string trios is their remarkable capacity for filling great volumes of musical space with a mere three instruments. The Serenade in D for Flute, Violin, and Viola Op. 25 follows this pattern, although the absence of a bass instrument leads to the creation of a gossamer tonal texture more suited to whimsy and charm than to heavier moods.

Flute, violin, and viola are by no means a weak or insubstantial combination, though—at least in Beethoven's hands. If his weaving of the three lines avoids the depths of the string trios, it fills in the middle and higher regions with structures of lasting interest and impact.

With James Galway's flute leading the way, the *Opus 25* is a lively and energetic thing, unburdened by the cares that weigh on most of Beethoven's compositions. All three players are as happy with themselves as they are with the music. The result is a lighthearted but confident performance, driven as much by the loveliness of each moment as by Beethoven's buoyant architecture.

The *B-flat Sonata* may not have been written by Beethoven, and if some day it is definitively removed from the canon no one will suffer much from the loss. The *Serenade Op. 8*, originally a string trio, appears here in the form of an arrangement for flute and piano by the great flutist Theobald Boehm. Beethoven himself approved similar arrangements of both *Op. 25* and *Op. 8* (which appeared as his Opp. 41 and 42). The *Op. 8* lacks the productive ebullience of the *Op. 25*, but Galway gives us such an intensely vivid beauty and purity of

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tone in the "Adagio" that you'll probably find yourself overlooking the limitations of the music.

I cannot so readily forgive this recording's sonic problems. The precious sound of the instrumental trio is pure and clear much of the time, but there is no definite sense of place. Although the instruments are comfortably spread and localized, the ear senses mixing at a control panel rather than in the complex acoustical environment of the stage. If we are situated anywhere, it is in the middle of the trio, with the members sitting around us. But this odd perspective is unconvincing.

On top of this come too many moments when the flute acquires a shrill and biting edge. I draw attention to this harshness because it happens more than once or twice and because it contrasts so sharply with the luxurious beauty of Galway's customary tone. It is this latter sound, I am glad to report, that -Tom Vernier graces most of the disc.

RATO MUSIFRANCE I SCOTT BOSS D'ANGLEBERT **Pièces** pour clavier 9 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

D'Anglebert: Pieces for Keyboard Scott Ross (harpsichord, organ) Erato 45007-2 (DDD) 1987 (90) Disc time: 124:27 (2 discs)

Before the piano, and before Ravel, Liszt, and Chopin, there was the harpsichord. Just as the piano has its special list of composers, so does its older cousin. On that harpsichord list, along with Scarlatti, Handel, and Couperin (plus Bach of course), surely belongs the name of Jean-Henry d'Anglebert.

D'Anglebert, who may have yielded to his brethren of the French keyboard school in melodic invention and dramatic construction, had a special compositional knack for exploiting the full range of his instrument. His technically intricate ornamentation molds to the seams of the music, growing out of it rather than fastening on from the outside. And while d'Anglebert reaches out to both ends of the keyboard, he seems especially fond of the lowest registers. If the instrument is of good quality, this makes a most pleasing sound.

On this recording Scott Ross plays an 18thcentury harpsichord, probably a grander instrument than those available to d'Anglebert. It certainly produces a grand sound-uncluttered with extraneous mechanical noises. All of the high frequencies of the harpsichord timbres are here, and the bottom notes rumble and boom with great authority.

The program contains, in addition to four

dance suites and a collection of diverse pieces for harpsichord, a gratifying banquet of organ fugues. D'Anglebert's youthful compositions for organ, while free of excessive elaboration and overdone Baroque finery, are solidly packed with musical delight. Ross embellishes the three- and four-voiced fugues with delicious subtlety. -Tom Vernier

9 PERFORMANCE

8 SOUND QUALITY

Balbastre: From the Harpsichord to the Fortepiano

Ivete Piveteau (harpsichord, fortepiano) Adda 581160 (ADD) (89) Disc time: 61:57

Claude-Bénigne Balbastre's life spanned the

years from the flowering of the harpsichord to the subsequent blossoming of the fortepiano. His music tells the story of the 18th-century keyboard. Ivete Piveteau's selections from Balbastre's numerous compositions combine enlightening scholarship with skillful expression and technique. Most of these short tunes were written in honor of prominent French men and women of the time, but their immediate inspiration is of less importance than the wide-ranging, celebratory spirit that drives

Piveteau plays with such care and love, and she is so obviously convinced of this music's edifying stature, that the limitations of the analog source tape barely intrude. Her instruments are no less remarkable than her playing.



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The Hemsch harpsichord dates from 1761 and boasts an 8 foot stop (added in restoration after the practice of the harpsichord and fortepiano maker Pascal Taskin) which energizes the strings by means of a piece of leather, rather than the normal quill plectrum. When this stop is activated the attack is gentler and not so charged with the high frequencies characteristic of a plucked string. The overall effect lies between the regular harpsichord and the fortepiano. We hear seven selections with the quill stop, three with the transitional leather stop, and then six pieces on the fortepiano, a Taskin instrument from 1788.

Balbastre is represented on numerous collections and compilations, but here he has an entire disc to himself. Put your Bach, Couperin, Handel, and Scarlatti aside for a while and take this opportunity to get acquainted with a lesser-known but brightly shining light of the 1700s.

—Tom Vernier

9 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

La Scala in Moscow 1964

Mirella Freni, Renata Scotto, Birgit Nilsson, Giulietta Simionato, Fiorenza Cosotto, Gianni Raimondi, Carlo Bergonzi, Bruno Prevedi

La Scala Orchestra and Chorus, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Herbert von Karajan Legato LCD-147-2 (AAD) 1964 (90) Disc time: 149:37 (2 discs)

In 1964, Italy's most treasured opera company traveled lock, stock, and barrel to Moscow for the first time, bringing complete productions of *Turandot*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Barber of Seville*, and *La Boheme*. La Scala also presented its stars in concert, with one evening devoted entirely to Renata Scotto and another to a unique joint recital of Birgit Nilsson, Fiorenza Cosotto, Mirella Freni, and Bruno Prevedi. Radio tapes of this visit have long been cult favorites, and Legato now reproduces the recitals complete and gives gen-

erous highlights of three of the opera performances recorded live at the Bolshoi Theatre. Presumably, *Lucia* is missing because of plans to release it complete at a later date.

Best of the set is Scotto's recital, an opera lover's orgy of arias with the finest Italian soprano of our time glowing in her glorious prime. She begins with Juliet's entrance aria from I Capuleti e i Montecchi by Bellini, conveying the young woman's quiet desperation on what is to be her wedding day. The thread of sound as Juliet wishes her bridal gown were a funeral shroud grows into voluptuous velvet as the famous "Quante volte" begins. A lesson in bel canto, the rest of the recital is given to Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, with unwritten E-flats tossed in all over the place. The Russian audience—not used to this sort of Italian bravura—goes wild.

The all-star night is full of surprises. Nilsson never was a great Verdi singer, but her account of Lady Macbeth's "Vieni t'affretta" is undeniably gripping. She has an uncanny aim for the heart of a note, the absence of portamento making it resound like thunder.

Mirella Freni, who sounds as fresh today as she did in these performances 25 years ago, is touching in Liu's suicide aria from *Turandot*. She then gives a beautiful, unflashy version of "Qui la voce" from *I Puritani*. Fiorenza Cosotto, sounding like a large kazoo, turns in a vulgar, fun rendition of "O don fatale" from *Don Carlo*.

The highlights of *Turandot* are Nilsson's three big scenes, magisterial and cool readings that defined this role for a generation. *Il Trovatore* offers Carlo Bergonzi and the superb Giulietta Simionato in peerless Verdian style. *La Boheme* shows Freni on the brink of international stardom in the role that made her famous as the heiress to Renata Tebaldi. Gianandrea Gavazzeni's conducting is what Italian opera is all about. Herbert von Karajan is in an unusually unfastidious mood, and the orchestra of La Scala is obviously caught in the midst of one terrific season. —*Octavio Roca*

CLASSICAL



Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C Major D 944

Dresden State Orchestra, Herbert Blomstedt Ars Vivendi MRC 013 (ADD) 1981 (90) Disc time: 53:44

8 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C Major D 944

St. Louis Symphony, Leonard Slatkin RCA 60174-2-RC (DDD) 1988 (90) Disc time: 55:42

8 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C Major D 944

London Classical Players, Roger Norrington Angel/EMI CDC-49949 (DDD) 1988 (90) Disc time: 58:20

6 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Schubert: Symphony No. 9 in C Major D 944

Hanover Band, Roy Goodman Nimbus NI 5222 (DDD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 61:16

These four recordings create something of a mixed doubles showdown match on the issue of performance practice. On the one side we have the traditionalists—Herbert Blomstedt and Leonard Slatkin. On the other are the period stylists—Roy Goodman and Roger Norrington. Yet it's not quite that simple. These are four individualists with their own perspectives on the heavenly expanse of Schubert's "Great" C Major Symphony. When all the fanfares have sounded, when all the idiosyncrasies are totaled up and the dust has settled, the most convincing case comes from the conductor in whom the old school is most deeply ingrained.

Blomstedt, a latter-day prophet of the Middle European tradition, delivers a great C Major to own and treasure, to hear again and again—a marvel of stylistic integrity that bears witness to the legitimacy of that tradition. Here is the Ninth Symphony touched with strength, nobility, and poetry, played out with an expansiveness of gesture that allows us to savor each facet in an evolving masterpiece.

CLASSICAL

From the outset, with that measured horn call, Blomstedt shapes a work of epic grandeur. The slow movement brings songful pause, phrase melting into phrase, an ebb and flow of potency and tenderness. It's disrupted at the midsection by an emotional turbulence in which you can feel the rumble of double basses beneath the clashing brass. Blomstedt's scherzo has an out-of-doors joyfulness and peasant stomp to it, and the finale, for all its power, possesses a grace to charm your socks off. While the Dresden orchestra shines in every section, it's a special pleasure to hear strings play with such agility and warmth. Credit a superb digital transfer of the original analog sound.

If Blomdstedt's Schubert falls on the romantic side of classicism, Slatkin's comes across as arch-Victorian. The opening movement, pointedly muscular and heroic, suggests Beethoven astride a Wagnerian steed. Even the slow movement bears a martial aspect. But the scherzo sails in buoyant fashion, as Slatkin constantly freshens the repeats with delayed beats, altered accents, and new voicings.

As for the period specialists, Norrington immediately undercuts an otherwise scintillating and thoroughly convincing performance by romping through the introduction. Schubert marked it "Andante," with a shift to "Allegro non troppo" for the sonata proper. There's precious little difference between Norrington's initial and accelerated tempos. However, once into the sonata structure, the high-spirited, smartly articulated performance begins to make sense

Quick? Effects that serve as focal points in conventional readings become mere ornaments to Norrington's swirling line. In an exuberant, joyful finale, he takes the repeat and finds myriad new wrinkles in those twicescanned measures. EMI's sound catches the gleam of a superlative effort.

The Hanover Band provides the one disappointment. Presiding over an ensemble of period instruments, Roy Goodman observes tempos closer to Slatkin's. The spaciously drawn opening movement works to bracing effect; in the second, Goodman evokes a mystic march, rather like a nocturne. From there, alas, the performance slopes into a pervasive understatement that grows simply noncommittal-an unfinished symphony. A wrong num--Lawrence B. Johnson ber.

9 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

W.A. Mozart: Concerto No. 12 for Piano in A Major K 414; No. 14 in E-flat Major K 449

Andras Schiff (piano) Salzburg Mozarteum Camerata Academica, Sandor Vegh London 417 886-2 (DDD) 1986 (89)

Disc time: 48:24

7 PERFORMANCE 6 SOUND QUALITY

W.A. Mozart: Concerto No. 18 for Piano in B-flat Major K 456; No. 19 in F Major K 459

Mitsuko Uchida (piano) English Chamber Orchestra, Jeffrey Tate Philips 422 348-2 (DDD) 1988 (89) Disc time: 56:30



When Mozart wrote his first piano concertos in Vienna, his aim was to impress without confounding, to delight without clowning. That is the stance Andras Schiff adopts for the Piano Concerto No. 12. His crescendos are smooth and long-reaching; his tempos easy and natural. Schiff has a pleasant way of measuring his phrases without any appearance of artifice or calculation. His Mozart is vigorous, almost impetuous, but always in control. Schiff is without peer in the performance of Bach on the piano, and he has taken his place in the front ranks of Mozart pianists as

Although the Concerto No. 14 was composed less than a year after No. 12, a considerable musical distance separates the two. A reflection of Mozart's growing willingness to display the full range of his talent, No. 14 is a rich and weighty piece. Here are complexities of development and shifts in tonality and mood to stimulate the most sophisticated sensi-

Schiff is not alone in taking command of the drama. There are challenges here for the orchestra too, well met by Sandor Vegh and the scintillating Salzburg Mozarteum Camerata Academica. Few ensembles master Mozart's constantly shifting rules of interplay between soloist and orchestra with so much exuberance and energy in reserve.

If Schiff knows the mind of Mozart, Mitsuko Uchida knows the soul. She takes the sad song of the slow movement of No. 18 and molds it into a statement of operatic propor-

tions. Indeed this concerto has much in common with Mozart's works for the stage, and conductor Jeffrey Tate, who is quite at home in the orchestra pits of the great opera houses of Europe, makes the most of the drama in the music.

Where Schiff is cool and sparkling in the fast movements Uchida is hot and anxious. She pulls and pushes at every note, without creating any feeling of awkwardness or panic. We strain with her, and we share the rewards as she wrings every drop of expression from her lines.

Unfortunately, the English Chamber Orchestra does not reflect Uchida's infatuation with Mozart. They come and go haphazardly, countering the piano's ardor with empty legato and half-hearted swells. There are exceptions to this disappointing mediocrity, most notably in the interplay between piano and winds in the "Allegretto" of the Concerto No. 19, but the overall picture is less than stirring.

On the London disc the piano stands out as a separate sonic entity, joined with the orchestra only at the mixing board. The treble end of the keyboard carries the still too common baggage of distortion, even at mezzo forte. Although Philips' engineers have placed the piano more naturally at the center of the orchestra, Uchida's high notes are not much cleaner than Schiff's. A bigger problem with the Philips disc is the nearly untamable brilliance of the orchestral passages. Turn down the high frequencies and you uncover a solid enough bass but a very flaccid midrange. -Tom Vernier

A Tchaikovsky Concert

The Tempest Op. 18; Violin Concerto in D Major; The Voyevoda Op. 78 Viktor Tretyahov (violin) USSR Radio Symphony, Vyacheslay Ovchinnikov Melodiya MCD 180 (AAD/DDD, 1979/84, 72:14) PERFORMANCE: 5 SOUND: 4

Soviet violinist Viktor Tretvakov has all but disappeared from the recording scene after some brilliant Melodiya releases in the late '60s. His alternately robust and sweetly lyrical tone in the concerto only reminds us of those earlier days of rising but unrealized greatness.

The other two works-recorded in 1979-should have remained in the vaults forever. The stilted performances are made even worse by the amazingly primitive analog sound. The digital concerto is only slightly better sounding; but again, the orchestra left its collective heart at home.

Debussy: Prelude from "The Afternoon of a Faun"; La Mer; Nocturnes

London Symphony, Rafael Fruhbeck De Burgos MCA MCAD-25879 (DDD, 1988, 58:37)

SOUND: 5 PERFORMANCE: 7

This is not a bad effort. If it weren't for the listener's perspective of being somewhere in the distant reaches of



the concert hall, this recording would be easy to recommend for a basic classical library. The playing is admirable enough: taut ensemble work and excellent solo performances in La Mer; sumptuous imagery in the Nocturnes and Prelude. If only the engineers had realized the sonic possibilities in these works-works that could have been composed for the modern recording

One further note: Although someone thought a vibratoless chorus in "Sirenes" was a nifty idea, the effect struck me as more sexless than sensuous-a worrisome state of affairs for a bevy of nymphs trying to lure lonely sailors into their deathly trap.

Byrd: Pieces from "The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book"

Ursula Duetschler (harpsichord) Claves CD 50-9001 (DDD, 1989, 69:31)

PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 7

Recorded in a resonant hall on an Italian instrument of remarkable strength and ringing brilliance, this selection of keyboard works by William Byrd deserves serious attention from anyone who appreciates the genius of this innovative composer and the sound of the harpsichord. Ursula Duetschler is a gifted and ingratiating

CAPSULE CRITIQUES

classical

by David Vernier

harpsichordist whose precision lends unusual clarity to every line and orna-

Composed mostly in the latter half of the 16th century, Byrd's keyboard works weren't just examples of a style-they defined the style, as he constantly employed his powers of invention to expand the conventions of the day. Duetschler's musicality brings all of this to life in a program that lets us explore many facets of Byrd's compositional mind-no area of which is boring.

The only reservation you may have—as I did—is that the acoustic is too lively for this instrument and repertoire.

Soviet Songs and Choruses

Lyatoshinsky Chamber Choir of Kiev, Victor Ikonnik; USSR TV & Radio Large Chorus, Klavdia Ptitsa. Ludmila Ermakova MCA MLD-32127 (AAD, 1979/81, 67:50) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 7

The second half of this recording, with the USSR TV & Radio Large Chorus was issued previously



on Mobile Fidelity (MFCD 876) under the title Choral Music by Russian Composers. The first work on this second half, Glinka's "Venetian Nights," is very poorly recorded; but after that, the sound improves. The singing, though a completely different style than we are used to in this part of the world, is nevertheless idiomatic and full of the home-grown spirit required to perform these works in their rightful context.

The disc's first half, featuring some 1960s compositions by Soviet composer Boris Lyatoshinsky, is better recorded and shows some remarkable singing. It also reveals worthwhile music that deserves to be better

The English Orpheus

Songs for Voice and Lute by John Dowland

Emma Kirkby (soprano); Anthony Rooley (lute, orpharion) Virgin 90768-2

(DDD, 1988, 57:38)

PERFORMANCE: 10 SOUND: 10

Soprano Emma Kirkby and lutenist

Anthony Rooley have been performing Dowland songs together for more than 10 years. This new Virgin disc is best described as a summation of their knowledge and experience with this uniquely beautiful repertoire. On display is Kirkby's impeccable artistrywhich includes a clarity of line unmatched by any of her colleagues, and an unfailing sense of what she is singing about and how to convey its meaning to her audience.

Also remarkable is the performance of Rooley-a perfect lesson both in the art of accompanying and in lute playing. Rooley plays several instrumental selections on the orpharion-a wirestrung relative of the lute that has a surprisingly gentle, graceful sound.

And speaking of sound, it would be hard to imagine how to improve it.

In some misguided circles of listeners, it's fashionable to dismiss everything Kirkby does (it's her pure, perfeetly controlled voice that puts them off). Here is another disc for them to hate. But the rest of us will find nothing but pleasure-and through these performances, renewed admiration for the tuneful riches of Dowland's music.

Schubert: Die Schöne Müllerin

Fritz Wunderlich (tenor); Hubert Giesen (piano) Verona 2701 (AAD, 1965, 61:05) PERFORMANCE: 10 SOUND: 6

Perhaps the greatest lyric tenor of this century, Fritz Wunderlich died in an accident at age 35. This tragic loss to the opera world was preceded by a number of fine recordings, including both operas and recitals.

This wonderful performance of Schubert's exquisite song cycle Die Schöne Müllerin (The Fair Maid of the Mill) was taken from a 1965 live radio broadcast the year before the tenor's death. The 20 songs are all masterpieces. The singing reminds us all the more of how deficient in real tenor voices the past 20 years have been.

Forget the minor background hiss, the occasional dropouts, the lack of notes on the music and the performers, and the absence of English translations of the song texts. Wunderlich's voice is exceptionally clear, and his partner at the piano is a perfect complement.

Russian Piano Music

Dmitry Paperno (piano) Cedille CDR 90000 001 (DDD, 1989, 71:04) PERFORMANCE: 7

SOUND: 7

You've probably never heard of pianist Dmitry Paperno, nor Cedille Records, but they've put together a nice disc featuring works by Russian composers, some familiar (Rachmaninov Preludes), and others unfamiliar to North American audiences (works by Medtner and Liadov). Also included are four selections from Tchaikovsky's "The Seasons" Op. 37a and Scriabin's Sonata No. 2 Op. 19. The piano playing is confident and competent-though you don't sense greatness in the interpretations. Neither does the sound set any new standard of excellence. Like the performance, it's good-but it doesn't have the realistic presence and depth of the best piano recordings.

Considering the musical value of this program, however, these problems seem picayune. Anyone wishing to broaden his or her experience with Russian music should enjoy this disc. The Rachmaninov, by the way, is superb.

Sibelius: String Quartet in A Minor;String Quartet in D Minor Op. 56 ("Voces Intimae'')

Sophisticated Ladies BIS CD 463 (DDD, 1989, 65:34) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 9

Sibelius and string quartets are usually not mentioned together. He wrote just four and only his last, the "Voces



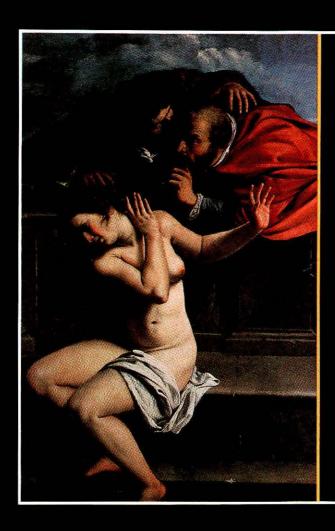
Intimae," has been given any kind of attention. Until this release, merely two recordings of this work existed on CD. It's not because the music is poor or lacks audience appeal; it's just that, well, Sibelius is known for symphonic compositions, not string quartets, and perceptions-even among musicians-are often hard to change. The fine performance here—the best on disc-may help renew some serious interest.

The music of the A Minor Quartet is immediately likable, if not striking for its profundity. The complete score for this very early, richly orchestrated work was located only recently. Lucky to have it performed by such a splendid

So who are these "Sophisticated Ladies"? Four young women who started playing classical string quartet music in a jazz club in Stockholm (and now include both jazz and rock in their concerts). On evidence of this recording, they are world-class players who deserve to be heard by an international audience-as soon, and as often, as possible.

Their well-matched instruments are recorded in a resonant acoustic, and the effect is to make the four players sound too spread out. The sound is beautiful, but I prefer string quartets to be less reverberant, more close-up and intimate.

58





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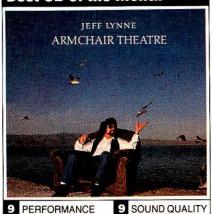
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POP/ROCK REVIEWS

Best CD of the Month



Jeff Lynne: Armchair Theatre Reprise 26184-2 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 37:06

Armchair Theatre will remind you of practically everything Jeff Lynne has done over the years. That includes his longtime leading role in the Electric Light Orchestra; his unmistakable production touches on George Harrison's Cloud Nine, Brian Wilson's self-titled solo album, Roy Orbison's Mystery Girl, and Tom Petty's Full Moon Fever; and his vital efforts as a songwriter, singer, guitarist, and producer on the Traveling Wilburys' Volume 1.

In other words, this isn't a groundbreaking recording destined to revolutionize rock. But so what? *Armchair Theatre* is an appealingly accessible album that also has moments of adventurousness. You'll find smatterings of early ELO eclecticism, later ELO mainstream pop, '50s-styled rock'n'roll, Beatles-ish melodies, some raw rockabilly, a couple of well-executed pop standards, and even a touch of Dylanesque folk/rock.

The overall feel of Armchair Theatre is summed up best by "Don't Say Goodbye" and "What Would It Take." The hooks on these back-to-back tracks are ebullient, the production is deft, and the multilayered harmony vocals are effervescent. They also show Lynne to be an excellent, expressive vocalist (especially during the closing moments of "Don't Say Goodbye").

But the most intriguing cut is "Now You're Gone," a haunting and bizarre pop ballad with wailing classical Indian voices, an unshakable hook, and a convincingly pained vocal. It's a masterful production—a brilliantly crafted piece that's as fascinating as anything from Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band. Speaking of which, George Harrison plays some subtle guitar on "Now You're Gone," there's a distinct Harrison/Indian atmosphere, and the underlying melody mirrors the Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)."

If "Now You're Gone" is a throwback to ELO's early oddness, "Every Little Thing" and "Blown Away" are references to ELO's late-'70s pop mastery. The former is a radioready single complete with those inimitably high-pitched, "Turn to Stone"-styled backup vocals. The latter is sort of a happy update of "One Summer Dream" (from ELO's Face the Music).

"Save Me Now" is more somber; it's also unlike anything Lynne ever did with ELO. On this slow, Bob Dylan-type acoustic-guitar-and-vocal number, Lynne's message is universal: "One day the earth woke up, said 'Boy I feel half-dead/Somebody's churning up the poison and it's getting in my head/Sometimes I wish my guests would move away somewhere/ 'Cause I'm burning up all over/I can't even breathe the air'." It's a welcome change to hear Lynne doing a stripped-down, unembellished, socially conscious number.

A couple more curveballs come in the form of "September Song" and "Stormy Weather," Lynne's remakes of old standards. He gives the former an echo-drenched, reverber ant reading (it's not far from Lindsey Buckingham's cover on his *Law and Order* album) and "Stormy Weather" a light, upbeat feel with a sprightly Harrison solo.

On the other hand, the cover of "Don't Let Go" comes off as bland rockabilly. But it hardly detracts from Lynne's craftsmanship as both a writer and producer. Richard Dodd's engineering captures everything perfectly—the lead vocals, instruments, and layers and layers of vocals. The result is a vibrant, warm, open, and well-balanced disc that proves AAD CDs sometimes can sound as full and dynamic as digital recordings.

—Larry Canale



Nick Lowe: Party of One Reprise 26132-2 (ADD) 1988-89 (90) Disc time: 36:02

Nick Lowe's career with Columbia is a study in decline. Not that he's ever made a bad album—it's just that after the unbridled sing-along joys of 1978's Pure Pop for Now People (which established his mastery) and 1979's Labour of Lust, his subsequent albums just didn't measure up. Still, there were always tunes to be salvaged. You are immediately directed to the Best of Basher compilation, which includes all but one song in his catchy canon, "They Call it Rock" (quite a feeble oversight). That brings us to present-day Lowe, making his debut on Reprise to reach pure pop heights once again.

Aided and abetted by a cast of cronies that includes Ry Cooder on electric guitar, long-time associate Paul Carrack on piano and organ, and session-genius Jim Keltner on drums, Lowe reunites with and turns over production reins to Dave Edmunds, who also tosses in a guitar lick or two. Lowe's always been best as

a producer for others (Graham Parker, Elvis Costello) and Edmunds' hit-the-bull's-eye approach has left him to worry only about the songs—a fine batch, indeed.

Lowe comes bouncing out of the gate all hearty and lust-filled with "You Got the Look I Like." The upbeat rockers are few and far between these days, but hooks abound in all tempos. "Who Was That Man?" boasts a melody running counterpoint to the song's story of anonymous death. Now in his 40s, Lowe's inward turns renounce cynicism for insight, confronting longings that can no longer be met, as on "What's Shakin' on the Hill." A decade ago, such a title would've set you up for a real party raver; now it's a blue ballad.

Which isn't to say that sharp-witted darts and fireballs of nonsense aren't his to toss. In "Shting-Shtang," he celebrates rock'n'roll, whatever the joyous noise may be. And "All Men Are Liars" talks truth, taking a good-natured and now-quoted zing at Rick Astley (which rhymes with—you guessed it—"ghastly"). Lowe's center of gravity on Party of One is "Rocky Road," where life's trials, tribulations, and rebirth as philosophical whimsy are set atop a rolling rhythm.

While every song isn't up to snuff, Party of One clearly qualifies as a bounce-back to potent form, filled with all the quipping and pop/rock mirth Lowe can dish out. Even the lyric booklet frolics, with mini-epitaphs and nonsequiturs to ponder, like "Don't shout monster—let me tango with dignity." Bet he rumbas in a sports car, too.

—Darryl Morden



O-Positive: Toyboat Toyboat Toyboat Epic/CBS EK 46018 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 44:27

If I were to try to write about some untenable strains of lissome sonic majesty and swirling vortex-style melody, O-Positive would tap me dry of untold pints of hemoglobin. For I'm of the unusual variety of transmutatable critics who likes his categories one day (for purposes of justification) and despises those neat little subdivisions the next (because it all seems like semantic quibbling).

So where does that leave us? In simple terms, O-Positive's first major label outing is a bloody smash. I'll pass on the inane descriptive nouns (tired words separated by slashes, as in progressive/post-punk/dance/funk/rock), and stake my claim in the aural delights

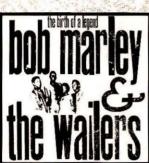
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this group has to offer. Principal songwriter Dave Herlihy constructs heady musical conundrums that aren't really that similar to R.E.M. or the Cure, a superficial comparison usually inflicted upon this Boston-based band.

For one thing, O-Positive's lyrics aren't as oblique as those by Athens, GA's favorite sons. Such ruminations as "Throwing all our weight around/It's so easy to put everybody down/It's too much and nothing's new/Taking my time looking over at you' (from "Hope the Boat") aren't meant to be profound. Herlihy isn't holding up his life as an example for people to follow. You'll find no elitism here; O-Positive's music is as simple and emotive as it is genuine and real.

There are some chord progressions that the Cure and others have used before ("Overflow," "Kamikaze Dove," and "Train Station Gone," for example), but the sound is not even close to being derivative of Robert Smith and company's often incessant, usually calculated gyrations. Besides these songs-which are three of the best on the disc-"Decide," the slow weeper "Imagine That," the electrofunk fortified "Innernational" (check out the horns!), the violin-tinged "Hope the Boat," and the dreamy ballad "Holding on to You" are standout tracks. The second single off the album, "Back of My Mind," seems a throwaway by comparison, however, and some of the songs rely on similar techniques and blend together after a while (those damn minor thirds don't help much).

Although the soundscape never really changes (all the instruments occupy the same space in each song), the moods, textures, and sonic colors shift dramatically from track to track. And for some reason, Herlihy's nasally, sometimes whiny voice never irritates.

-Edward Murray



New Kids on the Block: Step by Step Columbia/CBS CK 45129 (AAD) 1989–90 (90)

Disc time: 48:06

New Kids mania is at an all-time high, which makes it the perfect time for almost everyone to bash the boys from Boston. I love it when performers become so big that people begin recklessly tearing them to shreds. That's when I begin to listen with even more interest. And usually I'm not disappointed. Such is the case with this CD.

First off, Step by Step isn't a great album. It

won't turn heads or change most people's opinion of the group. But it is a fun session—complete with funky grooves and beautiful ballads.

On the positive side, Jordan Knight continues to amaze me with his soaring falsetto and the way he turns a phrase. His voice seethes with energy, especially on the title track and "Let's Try It Again." Donnie Wahlberg also stands out for his rambunctous wit and street sense, even though he's a bit toned down on this disc.

The group even ventures into new territory—with mixed results—and shows a maturing vocal style. On "Tonight" the New Kids use a Beatles-meets-ELO motif to chronicle their success and life on the road. The song, incorporating all the titles of their recent hits, works extremely well. But on "Stay with Me Baby," an excursion into reggae, the New Kids don't cut it.

Production on the 12 tracks is impeccably consistent, with great bass presence. Producer Maurice Starr does know his way around the studio. But I wish he'd loosen up on formula and let the guys cut loose a bit more. It's obvious they want—and need—to take off the training wheels.

That fact is never more evident than on "Happy Birthday," with Jonathan Knight singing lead. Aside from the fact that it's a blatant rip-off of "Happy Birthday Sweet 16," the cliché-ridden lyrics and sophomoric music only help perpetuate the kiddle image the group needs to shed. It's the worst song on the disc. And while "Time Is on Our Side" is less copycat, it's a parallel construction in style and arrangement to the Osmonds' hit "Love Me for a Reason." Borrowing styles is usually okay if you better the original, but that's not the case here.

The New Kids make some strides on Step by Step, enough to show that there's talent behind the image. With more adventurous and adult songs (kill those girl references, guys) and less cute, they may be able to survive after all the adulation dies down.

—Lou Waryncia



Lori Carson: Shelter DGC 24256-2 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 46:01

Lori Carson's *Shelter* is one of the more engaging debuts to surface in recent years. The title track, which opens the disc on a reflective, ethereal note, recalls early Joni

Mitchell—the godmother to innumerable singer/songwriters—as well as the tough, independent sensitivity of Sinead O'Connor. "Shelter" finds Carson left alone by the man to whom she once "pledged her love," riding a train of escape while cradling "two small babies" that serve to remind her of the past—and to console her.

The song sets the tone for the next 11 tracks—all of which deal with the ashes of romantic encounters that once held hope, but burned out all too quickly. Time after time Carson returns to the theme of failed relationships, of men who "take what they please" or "fall in love every minute." Though her wispy, often multitracked vocals at times recall Ricki Lee Jones, Carson doesn't enliven Shelter with a bright, sassy number the way Jones would have. There's no "Danny's All-Star Joint" on Shelter to cut through the malaise.

Not quite a happy affair, Shelter is nonetheless buoyed by Carson's insightful songwriting, Hall Willner's enchanting arrangements, inspired backing, and nicely executed guest shots by John Fahey, Rob Wasserman, and Gregg Allman, who provides an appropriately sorrowful vocal on the duet "Imagine Love." Taking the parts of former lovers, Carson and Allman stir the memories of what might have been if the love they once shared was still "waiting for them, frozen there in time." It's a remarkably moving moment.

Shelter ends on a curious note—a cover of Paul McCartney's "Junk." Carson's naive, childlike reading somehow misses the mark, though guitarist Marc Ribot contributes some tasty licks.

Despite Shelter's somber tone and the occasional misstep, Lori Carson is an imaginative and gifted artist worthy of a closer listen.

-Scott Belford



Daryle Ryce: Carolina Blue Rounder CD 3093 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 39:00

If pop stardom were based on vocal talent, songwriting smarts, and sheer heart alone, Daryle Ryce's *Carolina Blue* would no doubt be gaining the national attention it deserves. Effortlessly embracing elements of folk, soul, country, jazz, and blues, Ryce takes in all these influences, assimilates them, and turns them into a heady pop mix without sacrificing stylistic unity.

Highlighted by Don McClure's sinewy sax fills and Ryce's own assured vocals, "Livin' from Day to Day" kicks off the disc on a catchy, uplifting note that hints at Ryce's affection for folk-based pop. Yet Ryce uses the often inspired backing on Carolina Blue to flesh out other musical passions. She cuts a bluesy rock vocal on "So Long Ago," leads the band through a set of fiery exchanges on the gritty "Most of All," sneaks in elements of Calypso and her own classical guitar on the instrumental "Jonathan," strikes a down-home Memphis groove on "Chain It Up," and even breaks into some inspired scat singing from time to time. She eloquently winds things up on the heartfelt closer, "I've Got to Know," where her talents as a songwriter and singer shine through most dramatically.

Ryce and co-producer Ron Levy have assembled a fine backing band and supportive, casually integrated arrangements. Only "They're Gonna Put Me in the Movies"—with its funny/cynical chorus ("They're gonna put me in the movies/As soon as I change my face/Dye my hair blond/Maybe change my race")—suffers from its country swing interpretation, which is cute, but serves to undercut the bitterness at the song's heart. Sound quality, however, is uniformly warm and engaging, with plenty of room for Ryce to shine through vocally.

Though Carolina Blue doesn't fit neatly into the racially and stylistically segregated formats of American radio programming, it is nonetheless an impressive debut from a talented artist worthy of more than a just a regional following.

—Scott Belford



Chris Thomas: Cry of the Prophets Sire/Hightone/Reprise 26186-2 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 42:52

"You gotta have heart and soul" declares Chris Thomas, kicking off his formidable major label debut, Cry of the Prophets. Through the course of the next 43 minutes, he shows off ample doses of both, as well as a crack studio band and his own often astounding guitar prowess. Mixing bone-crushing R&B-inflected rockers with tough, soulful ballads, Thomas has created a spirited, inspired recording that sounds completely modern while remaining strongly rooted to rock'n'roll's finest traditions.

The stirring ballad "Help Us, Somebody" begs for a solution to the inner city tension that results in him finding his little brother "with a gun in his hand," fending off—but ultimately furthering—the chain of violence in the streets. The song fuses gospel changes, cascading drums, searing lead guitar, and a dramatic arrangement reminiscent of Prince's "Purple Rain."

Elsewhere, Thomas is equally adept at conjuring up a thoughtful, funky dance number ("Dance to the Music Till My Savior Comes"), a red-hot Memphis groove ("Last Real Man"), bouncy pop/rock ("I Wanna Die with a Smile on My Face"), and classy, socially conscious ballads that recall everyone from Marvin Gaye and Al Green to Prince and Jimi Hendrix.

If his songwriting and vocal talents somehow failed him, Thomas would nonetheless remain a guitar force for the '90s based on his performance here. He embellishes every cut with awe-inspiring style, whether nailing down a rock-hard riff, providing jazzy rhythm fills, or whirling into a blistering lead that couples the audacity and technique of Hendrix with the feel and restraint of Clapton.

-Scott Belford



Big Dipper: Slam *Epic/CBS EK 46063 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 42:48*

Big Dipper joyfully makes the jump to a major label with earthy eccentricities intact. If anything, the Boston group's co-production with Steve Haigler is so stark and airy, it only accents the band's adenoidal vocals and garage rhythms.

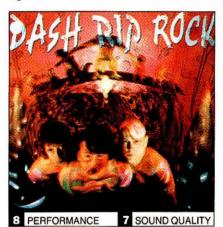
A quartet comprised mostly of former members of Volcano Suns, Dumptruck, and the Embarrassment, Big Dipper plays the part of ugly ducklings who have found the confidence to rock but still can't get the girl. The disc begins with the robust, buoyant "Love Barge," which nonchalantly laments, "Hey love barge!/Let me on the boat/Nothing I can do but stay afloat/Cling to the pieces and try to find a reason why." Later, "Picnic" offers a wry plea for recognition from the Bangles. After all, both bands share garage-pop roots (even if the Bangles moved on to pop star glamour), and now Big Dipper's a noticeable commodity.

Musically, Big Dipper plays it moderately straight, with bright, barbed guitars and huge hooks—from the chorus of "Another Life" (a weird look at the afterlife) to the Smiths-like serenade "Impossible Things." But lyrically, Big Dipper can be quite oblique. The fact that the spry "Bony Knees of Nothing" ("Make yourself at home/Sitting on the bony knees of nothing") is supplemented by horns doesn't deflect its unusual slant. "Life Inside the Cemetery" is another quirky but upbeat highlight, while "Baby Doll" has a sunny feel, a shifting beat, and a "tomorrow brings what tomorrow brings" philosophy.

"Baby Blue," on the other hand, is a melancholy ballad that settles in like a dead weight, cradled in prerecorded tape gurgling by fellow Bostonian Phil Milstein (ex-Uzi). There are also strange, growling samples (credited to Greg Moseley) on the title tune, but at least it boasts a better melody.

Yet for all its eccentricities, Big Dipper remains a pop band that can seriously rock, from the driving beat and raw guitar spurts of "Monsters of Jazz" to a surprisingly faithful cover of Mott the Hoople's '70s gem "All the Way from Memphis," with Gary Waleik handling the song's rollicking piano and session guest Tim Gordon providing some squealing sax. You can count Big Dipper among pop acts that can play it ragged but right.

—Paul Robicheau



Dash Rip Rock: Not of This World Mammoth MR-0020 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 36:34

Guitarist Bill Davis, bassist Ned Hickel, and drummer Chris Luckette of Dash Rip Rock aren't getting older. They're getting louder.

Named after Elly May Clampett's moviestar boyfriend in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, this fire-breathing Louisiana trio doesn't bother trying to modernize or sanitize its reckless rock'n'roll sound on *Not of This World*. Like last year's raw but rewarding *Ace of Clubs*, the group's third album pulls no punches and offers few frills. Produced by Jim Dickinson (the Replacements, Scruffy the Cat), these 12 ferocious tracks rely mostly on freight-train rhythms, snarling guitars, and backwoods caterwauling that proudly reveal Dash Rip Rock's bayou roots and bar-band battle scars.

The feisty festivities start with "Bum for Egypt," an anxious tale of undying devotion from a couch potato to a world traveler ("I don't like to travel/I just want to hang around/

But when I move, I move like a cat/I just scrape the air on the top of the ground''). Lead singer Davis suspiciously slurs the title/chorus behind an avalanche of crunching power chords so that it comes out sounding like a much different destination (think about it).

From there, Dash Rip Rock careens through a slew of thrashy, three-chord workouts—including "Rattle Trap," "I Don't Wanna Stop," "You Were on My Mind," and "Rich Little Bitch"—that by comparison make the Ramones sound narcoleptic. Also worthwhile are such bluesy, country-influenced footstompers as "Betty" and "Jolie." The album's funniest song is "String You Up," a Chuck-Berry-meets-the-Georgia-Satellites tribute to "the two finest things in the entire world: a Fender Telecaster and a beautiful girl" that paves the way for nasty double entendres ("I love to caress your long, long neck/And play along sweet and slow/Honey, when I rest my hand upon your bridge/It makes me feel dirty and low").

That kind of lustful intensity even runs through the ballads, including the lovely "Promenade" and the mournful "Christmas in El Paso." But these slow numbers are included on this disc as respites to allow the listeners, not the band, to catch their collective breath. At its best, *Not of This World* captures the uncompromising bravado that has already made Dash Rip Rock a night-club legend in its native South.

-David Okamoto



Graham Parker: Howlin' Wind Mercury/PolyGram 826 273-2 (AAD) 1975-76 (90) Disc time: 42:15

9 PERFORMANCE

8 SOUND QUALITY

Graham Parker: Heat Treatment Mercury/PolyGram 826 274-2 (AAD) 1976 (90) Disc time: 35:59

In 1976, music found itself in a sorry state. Bruce Springsteen was tied up in legal entanglements that would keep him from releasing a new album for two more years, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers were just finding their foot-

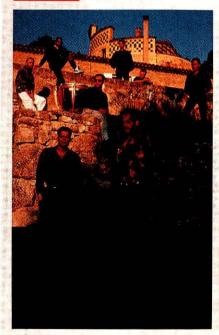
ing, and sappy pop and heartless disco (forget those people *now* telling you how great it was) ruled the day.

So Graham Parker seemed to come from out of nowhere, spinning on a Dylan/Van Morrison axis. He tempered his rage with a soul simmer, anticipating the festering boil of punk yet to explode. Elvis Costello was to appear a year later, and there would be comparisons between the two. Costello soon eclipsed him with more consistent songwriting, but Parker was the better singer, and he shredded the competition with the ferocity of a driven man. Released within the same year, Howlin' Wind and Heat Treatment were like bookends, both drawing on classic forms and both pointing the way toward the future. Their CD reissuance is a cause for celebration and a fond look back.

Parker couldn't have done it without the Rumour—graduates of the British pub rock scene who could master the grooves of R&B, rough-and-tumble rock, and even reggae rhythms. In their day, these guys were a match for the E Streeters, Heartbreakers, Silver Bullets, and the like.

Produced by Nick Lowe, Howlin' Wind swings with "White Honey," does a rockabilly dance in "Back to Schooldays," struts with "Soul Shoes," and turns big band blues upside down with "Lady Doctor." The songwriting is confident and versatile, especially in the reggae variations of "Howlin' Wind" and the climactic "Don't Ask Me Questions," which squares off against the deity, refusing to back down.

F Y I UB 40



James Brown, the dynamic drummer and percussionist who fuels the spicy reggae fire beneath UB40's sound, chuckles facetiously. He's just been asked whether his eight-piece band might show up at a special concert featuring Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, and Johnny Clegg to celebrate Nelson Mandela's visit to Boston.

"Don't confuse activism with realism," Brown warns. "We played in the first big Mandela benefit in England a while back, and we watched Whitney Houston take a large Coca-Cola banner and cover a huge mural of Mandela with it, right up on stage. We decided that that was it for us and alleged benefit concerts with multiple acts.

"People played that show who did not even know who Nelson Mandela was," he adds. "They played it because some record company honcho sitting in a New York or L.A. office told them to play it, because it was a good career move. There was no heart or soul there."

Perhaps Brown and his mates took such exception to Houston's callousness because unlike her material, UB40's music has always been strong on substance and conviction. On 1986's Rat in the Kitchen, four songs were specifically written about the anti-apartheid movement and the state of things in South Africa. Anger spilled in all directions.

Throughout its 10-year career, the band has reflected plenty of that anger, pain,

and injustice. But UB40 also plays healthy doses of infectious reggae pop songs, serving as irresistible invitations to get up and dance—or skank, as Brown puts it. It's mostly the latter that fills its current release, Labour of Love II (Virgin 91324-2). Like 1983's Labour of Love, this one is comprised completely of cover songs.

Once again, UB40 has borrowed tastefully, from AI Green's peppy "Here I Am (Come and Take Me)" to Leroy Sibble's dance hall classic "Baby." They transform these songs into their trance reggae sounds, with smooth duets between brothers Ali and Robin Campbell, whose high tenor vocal harmonies have never sounded better. But don't despair, true reggae buffs. There are the obligatory dub-reggae raps from their DJ toastmaster, Astro.

"We'd been on the road for more than a year, and had another six months to go," Brown explains. "We didn't have the time or the energy to write a whole new record, and we wanted to do something for fun. We had a blast making this record. It's just a continuation of the list we drew up for the first Labour of Love. There are plenty more songs on that list, so you can expect a third one later on."

-Kevin Connal

Heat Treatment followed mere months later as a matching dose of soul and sweat. The production was even more forceful, with Robert John "Mutt" Lange at the helm. Passionate fire explodes in the horn-driven title song. Parker drips sarcasm on "That's What They All Say." On "Pourin' It All Out" he confesses to the world, with the twin guitars of Martin Belmont and Brinsley Schwarz answering in turn.

There are no remastering credits on either CD, but the sound sparkles with darting piano, clean slide guitar, and lively horns, all clearly and crisply mixed-quite a feat considering the recording techniques at the time.

To hear these albums again is an act of rediscovery. The only complaint would be the short playing times. PolyGram could have tacked on music from the out-of-print Pink Parker LP. which includes live tracks and a cover of the Trammps, "Hold Back the Night," an actual chart hit for Parker. -Darryl Morden



8 PERFORMANCE 6 SOUND QUALITY

Elvis Presley: The Million Dollar Quartet RCA 2023-2-R (AAD) 1956 (90) Disc time: 66:58

The Million Dollar Quartet was actually a trio. Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins comprised rock'n'roll's first legendary jam session on December 4, 1956 at Sun Studios in Memphis, TN. Supposedly Johnny Cash joined in on a couple of numbers, though they've never been found and thus aren't included here. (Cash did stick around for the photo shoot; that's where the "quartet" comes from.)

What's included on this disc are musical snapshots of that memorable afternoon-valuable not only because of the performers involved, but also because what they sang and talked about provides an intimate glimpse at the roots of rock'n'roll.

Many of the 41 tracks on The Million Dollar Quartet are less than a minute long. You'll hear snippets of songs, jokes, riffs, and bits of conversation that are far more precious to the student of rock history than to the casual listener. There are, however, some complete songs on the disc. Whether it's the quartet's heartfelt version of "Jesus Walked That Lonesome Valley," a playful rendition of "Don't Be Cruel," or a rockin' interpretation of "Brown Eyed Handsome Man," the spontaneity of these tunes and the others is what makes this jam so magical.

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There's no question who the leader of this quartet is. Throughout the disc, it's Elvis who sets the pace, starts most of the songs, and offers the most insightful comments. We've read so much about how Presley was inspired by black blues. "That's Alright," Presley's first single, was borrowed from bluesman Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. But one good listen to *The Million Dollar Quartet* and you'll hear loud and clear how much gospel music as well as country & western and bluegrass (particularly the sounds of Hank Snow and Bill Monroe) influenced Presley.

To preserve authenticity, this CD was released in mono. The sound is warm and inviting and the clarity is better than you'd expect. The Million Dollar Quartet isn't the kind of disc you'll play regularly; it's too clipped and chatty for repeated listenings, and the music is understandably rough. But the disc does give Presley fans the chance to hear the King make music history with his friends. For rock historians, getting the chance to eavesdrop on this famous session is reason enough to make it a permanent part of a CD library.

-Robert Santelli



The Assassins: Cut Me Loose Seymour SRCD-0004 (AAD) 1989 (89) Disc time: 46:52

With former Nighthawks guitarist Jim Thackery at the helm, you might expect Washington, DC's Assassins to be a killer blues band. It isn't, but then again, it's not trying to be. On its third album, Cut Me Loose, this six-man group moves beyond its Chicago blues roots and delves into a rowdy bag of red-hot, blue-eyed Memphis soul, R&B, and gospel numbers built around Thackery's tasty solos and the raucous lead vocals of Root Boy Slim alumnus Tommy Lepson.

The Assassins started out as a part-time, all-star aggregation (their first album was called *No Previous Record*). But now, six years later, they've solidified into a hard-driving, havoc-wreaking bar band still learning to cope with the same artistic dilemma that faced the Nighthawks—how to reach a wider audience without sacrificing their traditionalist roots.

As a result, Cut Me Loose starts off on shaky ground. The title track strains to re-create Robert Cray's cosmopolitan-blues sheen, while the glossy pop/soul of "Backstreet Willie" and "I Just Want You" could pass for

Huey Lewis or the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Thankfully, the second half redeems the Assassins in all its sweat-soaked glory. Bruce Harrison plays more piano and organ than synthesizers, and Lepson gets to sink his teeth into material worthy of his fine voice, from the gospel strains of "Take Me in Your Arms" and the Memphis soul balladry of an old Nighthawks leftover called "If You Go" to the rollicking abandon of "Shot of Rock and Roll." Thackery gets his licks in, too, particularly on such fun, straight-ahead blues romps as "Had It with You Baby" and "I'm Changin"."

The Assassins sound more aggressive and less concerned with commercial acceptance as the disc progresses, eventually rescuing *Cut Me Loose* with the fiery passion and keen execution that helps this band live up to its name.

—David Okamoto



Beats International: Let Them Eat Bingo Elektra 60921-2 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 54:28

By blending hip hip-hop and succulent soul music, Beats International's Let Them Eat Bingo stands as one of the year's most dazzling dance albums. Like Was (Not Was), this British aggregation—the brainchild of former Housemartins member Norman Cook—is a producer's playground that pairs such guest artists as Billy Bragg, Captain Sensible, and Double Trouble with a stylistic potpourri that ranges from rap to reggae to rock.

Through inventive uses of samples and other high-tech gimmickry, Cook indulges in a fun game of genre-crossing that sounds odd on paper but marvelous on disc. He borrows the loping reggae rhythm track from the Clash's "Guns of Brixton" to support Lindy Layton's knockout vocals on "Dub Be Good to Me" (a.k.a. the S.O.S. Band's "Just Be Good to Me"), and grafts wah-wah guitars and '70s funk rhythms onto a fun cover of Fats Domino's obscure 1960 hit, "Before I Grow Too Old."

What separates Cook from most of his dance music peers is his canny knack for writing songs that accent the beat yet retain the soulful essence and melodic charm that great R&B demands. "For Spacious Lies" is pure pop heaven, a marvelous cross between '70s soul and '90s dance music that finds Cook's boyish tenor cascading over a luscious melody spiked with sarcastic lyrics, punchy horns, and Latin-

flavored acoustic guitar solos (the CD includes a bonus-track remix).

But the album's best song is "Won't Talk About It," a surprisingly silky piece of blue-eyed soul co-written and sung by British folkie Billy Bragg. On his own albums, Bragg generally sings in a sneering, cockney-accented tenor that—coupled with his trenchant political commentaries—makes him a hard sell in America. Here, he slips into a disarming falsetto that makes up in genuine feeling what it lacks in range.

At times, Cook settles for making a racket instead of music. Such mechanical, patchwork dance floor numbers as "Blame It on the Bassline," "Dance to the Drummer's Beat," and "The Ragged Trousered Percussionists" lose their appeal long before their five minutes are up. But generally, Cook keeps such outbursts under control on *Let Them Eat Bingo*, save for some offbeat transitions between songs—including an Eva (*Green Acres*) Gabor impression ("Oliver dahling, call Mr. Haney, I think our speakers are blown")—that keep the fun going even when the music stops.

-David Okamoto



Buffalo Springfield: Buffalo Springfield Atco 33-200-2 (AAD) 1966 (90) Disc time: 33:02

10 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

Buffalo Springfield: Buffalo Springfield Again

Atco 33-226-2 (AAD) 1967 (90) Disc time: 33:56

10 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Retrospective: The Best of Buffalo Springfield

Atco 38-105-2 (AAD) 1969 (89) Disc time: 40:17

The recent releases of Buffalo Springfield and Buffalo Springfield Again on CD stand as two of the year's most important reissues of classic rock'n'roll. Anyone familiar with '60s and '70s rock music will no doubt recognize the names of Stephen Stills, Neil Young, Richie Furay, and Jim Messina. Yet Buffalo Springfield was much more than a jumping-off point for these soon-to-be-famous musicians, who would go on to more lucrative success with the likes of Crosby, Stills, Nash, &



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Those were the first words to appear in the first editorial in the premier issue of this magazine. The line referred to the technology that spawned compact discs and advanced the sound of recorded music. But it also was a credo for Digital Audio Magazine - which would strive to simultaneously "entertain, educate, and inform people who enjoy music." We would review and rate new CDs and reissues in terms of musical and sound quality. We would test audio equipment. We would report on new technologies, products, and CD releases. We would interview the people who make music. And we

would serve as a watchdog for CD quality.

Six years and two significant name changes later (Digital Audio to Digital Audio & Compact Disc Review to CD Review), we're alive, kicking, and more robust than ever. So is the compact disc. Flashes in the pan simply don't last this long.

The first issue of *Digital Audio*Magazine—distributed in August 1984 with a September cover date—was both a struggle and a joy to produce.

The gestation period lasted a little more than nine months, and it generated all the optimism, cockiness,

apprehensiveness, and pessimism of any magazine start-up. The promise of compact discs, though, made *Digital Audio* a sure bet.

So did the support of the major audio manufacturers, who endorsed both the CD and our magazine. Sony, developer of CD technology, has been highly visible in our pages from the start. When you open the first page of that first issue, you see a two-page Sony advertisement introducing its new ES component line.

Continued on p. 72



For years, ads like this have paid off handsomely for Sony Corp. According to our most recent survey, nearly 40 percent of *CD Review's* readers own a Sony compact disc player.



Introducing the Sony D-35 Discman® Portable Compact Disc Player.

Mozart, at the tender age of 8, measuring just 4' tall, created his magnificent Symphony in C Minor.

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The D-35, like all Sony Discman portables, offers the expertise expected from the inventors of the compact disc. And like the Maestro himself, it demonstrates that size has nothing whatsoever to do with ability.

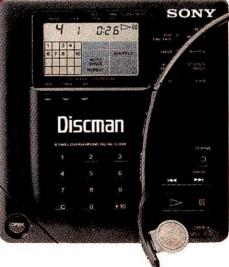
SONY

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And when you look at our starkly designed CD player buyer's guide in Issue No. 1, you can see how quickly Sony—which made the first CD player for sale in the U.S.—jumped to the forefront of digital audio consumer products. Of the 47 players covered in that guide, nearly 1/5th of them were from Sony, whose seven models ranged in price from \$700 to \$1500 to \$6500.

Our first edition also noted that compact

discs were "blowing the lid off" the entire audio industry. Amplifier, headphone, and speaker sales were sure to climb over the next several years, and they did. Polk Audio foresaw that trend. The company's full-page advertisement in Issue No. 1 depicted several different loudspeakers it manufactured with the "Digital Disc Ready" tag that many other companies would adopt.

While stereo equipment makers were

busy readying their product for the "digital age," record labels also were getting set to meet the challenge. When our first issue appeared, the entire catalog of compact disc titles—all 1400 of them—fit onto just 11 pages. In each succeeding month, however, it seemed like record labels were rolling out at least that many more.

Continued on p. 74



In the beginning there was Polk Audio—minus Matthew Polk and his soon-to-become-familiar white lab coat.



Conductor Joseph Silverstein, who at the time was leaving the Boston Symphony Orchestra to direct the Utah Symphony, was the first artist interviewed in our pages.

Remember
the Glenn Miller
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the Digital
Mood? At a
time when
there were few
jazz discs available, that title
and several
others advertised by GRP
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consumers.



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David Benoit "Inner Motion"



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Our editors, meanwhile, were scrambling for discs to review, since labels weren't equipped to service the media with complimentary review copies. Our early critics and staff members purchased many of the titles we evaluated.

We somehow managed to cram 19 whole

reviews in that first issue—as our cover proudly trumpets. (Now we surpass 100 every month.) Among the titles we scraped up for critique: the Beatles' *Abbey Road* (a Japanese import that rated a 10/7.5—and soon was pulled off the market); the Police's new *Synchronicity*; Don Menza's

Burnin' (our lone jazz review); and Georg Solti & the Chicago Symphony's reading of Mahler's Symphony No. 9. The "new age" category had yet to be invented, so our review of An Evening with Windham Hill Live was put under the heading "Third Stream."







Some things never change. Even in Issue No. 1, we were shoehorning almost *too much* info into the magazine.



Like we were saying, some things never change. Even in Vol. 1, No. 1 we resorted to groan-inducing puns like "Compact Disc-ussions." Denon began its long relation-ship with Digital Audio (and CD Review) by advertising eight classical discs. The company also frequently showcases its CD players in our pages.





Relatively few record companies had released CDs by that time (just 56 labels, compared to more than 1500 today). But several who had bravely taken the plunge invested in *D.A.* ads touting their product.

GRP, for example, took the opportunity to promote six jazz titles. Dave Grusin's Night-Lines and the Glenn Miller Orchestra's In the Digital Mood—Digital Audio Readers' Choice favorites for months on end—headlined the ad. Gerry Mulligan, Special EFX, Kevin Eubanks, were also featured.

"The impact of the digital compact disc on the home entertainment industry has been, in a word, enormous."

Sheffield Lab announced its first 11 CD releases, including titles by audiophile favorites Amanda McBroom and Lincoln Mayorga. Sheffield's initial batch of discs also included Tower of Power, James Newton Howard, Thelma Houston, Dave Grusin, and Harry James titles.

Denon, meanwhile, used Digital Audio No. I to showcase eight classical discs, among them Schubert's Symphony No. 9 by Heinz Rogner and the Berlin Radio Symphony, four Beethoven recordings, and Debussy's Preludes Deuxieme Livre by Jacques Rouvier. "Imagine what we'll do next," Denon teases on its ad.

By now, the people who read *CD Review* know what to expect. We continue to reflect the fast-moving music world as well as the fascinating audio industry. Early on, we encountered more than a few detractors who questioned not only the need for a compact disc magazine, but the viability of the CD as a mass-market item.

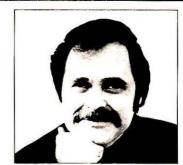
But as Martin Homlish, president of Sony Audio Component Systems, says, "The impact of the digital compact disc on the home entertainment industry has been, in a word, enormous. From its launch in March of 1983, when there was only one CD player and just 16 music titles, the compact disc today generates more than \$5 billion in hardware and music retail sales annually.

"In fact," Homlish adds, "CD has become synonomous with the best in music entertainment in not just the home, but in the car or anywhere music is enjoyed."

Adrenaline, or Overdubbing?

(Or how "less is more" when it comes to great sounding CD's)

Do you feel frustrated when your expensive CD's seem to lack the thrilling feel that only <u>live</u> music can give? My partner, Lincoln Mayorga, and I started Sheffield



Doug Sax, President Sheffield Lab & The Mastering Lab

Lab 22 years ago in what many thought was a "quixotic" quest to capture, without compromise, the sound of world-class musicians playing together live. Today, some three dozen audiophile recordings later, we remain convinced that a pint of adrenaline goes a lot further in producing exciting records than a gallon of overdubbing. All of our records are recorded live to two-track master tape, with no overdubbing, ever. The results? For most listeners, when hearing a Sheffield Lab recording for the first time, the sense of live musicians being present is simply stunning! It sounds live because it is live, and you hear the synergy and involvement of all the musicians contributing their parts together in real time.

In addition to the "adrenaline" factor, our records benefit from our own custom-built microphones, consoles, monitors—you name it—all to get maximum excitement into the pits, groove, or tape gap. No wonder our recordings are revered world-wide by audiophiles, reviewers and equipment manufacturers for testing and evaluating components. They like to talk about greater transparency, phase linearity and dynamic range. But you'll just want to know how that hot band got into your living room! Bottom line? Our CD's sound good, and our CD's feel good!

Our compact disc line features exciting releases like "James Newton Howard & Friends," "Growing Up in Hollywood Town" by Amanda McBroom & Lincoln Mayorga, "Tower of Power Direct," "The Sheffield Track/Drum Record," Thelma Houston's "I've Got The Music in Me," and three stellar recordings by Harry James & His Big Band. Recent offerings include singer/songwriter Clair Marlo's "Let It Go," jazz pianist Pat Coil's "Steps," as well as contemporary pop and country songs by Larry McNeely on "After Midnight."

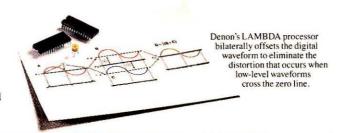
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Starting with the first digital recording of music in 1972, Denon has produced an unbroken string of digital audio breakthroughs.



The LAMBDA Super Linear Converter: Another significant digital audio first from the first company to record music digitally.



player innovations include the Super Linear Converter, the 20-bit digital filter, the real 20-bit converter and noise-shaping filter circuitry.

Denon's latest digital advancement is the LAMBDA Real 20-Bit Super Linear Converter in the DCD-1560. The LAMBDA system's digital offset processor and dual 20-bit converters eliminate the most common source of distortion in CD players: the zero crossings of low-level signals.

Denon's consistent leadership in digital audio technology may explain why earlier generation

Denons often sound better than current competitors' models.

And why a leading hi-fi journal found that a moderately-priced Denon equalled or outperformed all others tested, including machines costing over \$1800.

What makes Denon CD players better? Perhaps it's that Denon performs every step in the music chain from recording artists through pressing CDs. And that Denon has concentrated on one thing and only one thing for 80 years.

Music.

DENON

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Young, Poco, and Loggins & Messina

Buffalo Springfield, the group's self-titled 1966 debut, is energetic and still vital, showcasing the remarkable songwriting talents of Stills and Young alongside a vibrant, often eccentric mix of British Invasion pop and subtle country & western shadings.

The disc leads off with one of Buffalo Springfield's best-known songs, "For What It's Worth," a Stills composition about police/ hippie confrontations along L.A.'s famed Sunset Strip. A '60s protest song with a localized slant, "For What It's Worth" should sound dated by now, but it doesn't. Stills' forboding tale of impending street violence could aptly describe escalating urban tension in any city today, and the starkly embellished funeral march arrangement and call to action chorus ("Stop children, what's that sound?/ Everybody look what's goin' down'') remain timeless and quietly unnerving more than two decades later.

Elsewhere, Buffalo Springfield is highlighted by strong mid-'60s pop, courtesy of Stills ("Go and Say Goodbye," "Sit Down I Think I Love You,"), Furay's stirring, often-ignored classic "Flying on the Ground Is Wrong," and two fine Young performances ("Out of My Mind" and "Burned"). Young's tracks hint at how he would eventually turn confusion and confessional self-absorption into a high art form.

Sound quality is generally good for a recording of this vintage, though tape hiss is evident throughout. The reproduction is occasionally brittle and thin, especially on the aforementioned Young performances.

With Buffalo Springfield Again, the group produced its crowning achievement. Nearly every track is a mini-masterpiece, pushing the limits of '60s production values and recording techniques.

Young's Dylanesque rocker "Mr. Soul" opens the disc, signaling the arrival of a band that, while only a couple of years old, has come full circle in the breadth of its talent. The sound is more dense and assured, with a biting vocal by Young and thick, searing guitar runs propelled by Bruce Palmer's bass and Dewey Martin's steady drumming.

Furay points the direction for the emergence of country/rock with his own timeless "A Child's Claim to Fame"; Stills turns in some of the strongest performances of his career with "Bluebird," "Rock & Roll Woman," and "Hung Upside Down"; and Young all but upstages everyone with his symphonic gem "Expecting to Fly" and the atmospheric, cutand-paste "Broken Arrow." The disc's relatively clean and warm sound makes it all the more appealing.

Retrospective was released on disc a year ago, and remains an excellent sampler. It pulls most of the best cuts from the band's first two albums, along with highlights from the group's third (and final) release, Last Time Around, which, curiously, is still unavailable -Scott Belford on CD.

What It All Means

Yes, those odd numbers and symbols that begin each review do have a meaning. Here it is in English:

Company name; disc number; (SPARS code); year of original recording; (year of CD release).

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*Billboard's 1990 International Recording Equipment & Studio Directory, Oct. 1989 © AKG 1990 @ Akustiche und Kino-Geräte GmbH, Austria



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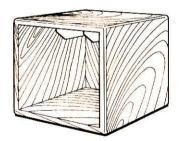
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Steve Wynn: Kerosene Man *Rhino R2 70969 (AAD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 49:42*

Like many a collegiate lad in the late '70s, hearing the Sex Pistols kicked open a door of musical possibilities for guitarist/vocalist Steve Wynn. The '80s found him fronting the L.A. band Dream Syndicate, where he took the punk-trash ethic and attempted to merge it with style, a la John Coltrane, as a higher level of actual songcraft began to set in. Now, almost a decade later, Wynn has emerged as a master of many forms, linked by a sharp wit and perceptive edginess on his solo bow, *Kerosene Man*.

The first track, "Tears Won't Help at All," recalls the Dreamers in its minor-chord, de-

scending progression, with Wynn stepping outside himself to confront self-doubts and hesitation. He follows in lighter colors with a pop song, "Caroline," that soars over a plucked mandolin courtesy of L.A. rock critic and musician Robert Lloyd. Here, Wynn borrows from Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love" to sing, "C'mon and take a walk with me baby," then adds, "And start all over again."

Starting all over again is exactly what Wynn seems to be doing here. Producer Joe Chicarelli has coaxed out of Wynn a wider, more expressive vocal range.

Though never a great formal vocalist, Wynn certainly is a jabbing, attention-grabbing singer. In "Younger" he scowls and rants through a mind-blown Dylanesque landscape as guitars ascend to climax. "Something to Remember Me" features a slicing harmony line by Julie Christensen (who, by the way, is slated to make her own debut on PolyGram). She also duets on the refrain of the two-stepping "Killing Time," where love's failure is compounded by lack of interest.

Working with different players has opened up the arrangements without allowing the songs to lose focus. A saxophone from Steve Berlin of Los Lobos wafts through night fog to set the tone for the chilled story of the "Blue Drifter." Wynn collaborated with Johnette Napolitano of Concrete Blonde for "Conspiracy of the Heart." Sung together, it's the hushed whisper of a confessional. And throughout, guitarist Robert Mache adds in-

teresting new strokes and tones to the mixed

Equally mocking and tender, branching out but never losing his center, Wynn ignites Kerosene Man to blaze himself a new trail.

-Darryl Morden



Nuclear Valdez: I Am I Epic/CBS EK 45354 (AAD) 1989 (89) Disc time: 47:13

Nuclear Valdez is a Miami rock band that boasts a crisp mainstream sound undercut with a rootsy, earnest urgency and a predeliction for songs of faith, love, hope, and strength. There's also a populist slant, as the group laments the lost fortunes of the working class in a style that sometimes echoes John Cougar

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Mellencamp or even U2. However, the band's debut disc—which was recorded in California with producers Richard Gottehrer and Tom Panunzio—strives for a big, polished sound, and Froilan Sosa's lead vocals are a little too studied and melodramatic for any serious emotional impact.

Sosa's lyrics are nothing if not right to the point (there are even songs titled "Hope" and "Strength"), and he likes to lay on metaphors-starting with rain. "It rained and it rained all summer," he sings on lead track "Summer," which concerns the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (three-quarters of the band are Cuban; Sosa hails from the Dominican Republic). On "Hope," Sosa sings "I want to see sunshine where there's rain" in a song about lost love. The pastoral language sometimes gets to be a bit much, though, with lines like 'Life keeps running through my veins' and "Time wipes the smile from my face" (from "If I Knew Then") creeping in all over the disc. "Trace the Thunder" is boosted by brisk acoustic strumming and a pumping rhythm, while "Unsung Hero" is an ode to controversial comic Lenny Bruce. "Apache" is another uplifting tune, with sharp riffs and a driving

But the album peaks with "Run Through the Fields," a countryish lope that examines the poverty and misery found in the fields and streets of America. The Bo Diddley-styled "Where Do We Go from Here?" follows with more concern for the middle and lower classes, wielding power chords behind Sosa's soaring vocal.

Nuclear Valdez's delivery is slick and calculated, but its focus and consistency does provide somewhat of an edge.

-Paul Robicheau



Aaron Neville: Orchid in the Storm Rhino R2 70956 (AAD) 1981, 85 (90) Disc time: 19:58

Orchid in the Storm is a pleasing but incredibly brief sampler of Aaron Neville recordings that emphasizes the singer's affection for '50s vocal greats like Jackie Wilson and Clyde McPhatter. Clocking in at less than 20 minutes, it's hard to imagine why the concept, which is a good one, wasn't expanded to include more than five tracks. I mean, one of the cuts, "The Ten Commandments of Love," is actually lifted off a decade-old Neville Brothers disc! C'mon Rhino. You can do better.



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—Philadelphia Inquirer



That said, anyone who shares Neville's affection for early rhythm & blues, vocal harmonizing, and '50s-era ballads will no doubt be entranced by his peerless tenor on these five standards.

Joel Zorn's production and Wardell Quezergue's arrangements are appropriately restrained, though nicely accentuated. "Pledging My Love," for instance, features a laid-back, exceptionally reedy sax solo courtesy of David "Fathead" Newman. "For Your Precious Love" shows off the impressive harmonizing of the Neville Brothers, while "This Is My Story/We Belong Together" warmly utilizes the vocal support of Art Neville over a sparse but effective piano arrangement.

The most exciting thing about Orchid in the Storm is the voice of Aaron Neville himself. His improvising during the climax of "Earth Angel" is simply breathtaking in its soaring display of emotion, taking the song way beyond the polite remake it starts out to be.

-Scott Belford



Corey Hart: Bang! EMI CDP 92513 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 43:01 Recently, while reliving the past via Martha Quinn's tribute to MTV's "glory days," I caught Corey Hart's vintage video "Never Surrender." The clip, built entirely around a frightened-looking Hart peering soulfully into the camera with a pout of overwrought melancholia, did more to convince me of his potential as a male model rather than as a singer/songwriter. Thankfully, his music has grown less self-involved over the years, while his singing has become more well-rounded.

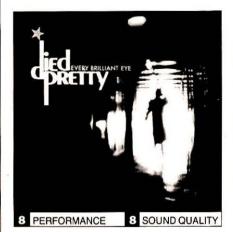
Bang!, Hart's most recent effort, is an often bracing though highly listenable pop/rock recording. His expressive vocals are keenly matched to a slick but energetic backing band that nails down consistently glossy radio rock without forfeiting the music's edgy bite.

Such upbeat numbers as "A Little Love," "Icon," and the title track kick in with confident authority. The bouncy "Icon" even makes a nice play on the singer's own dreams of superstardom, with Hart coyly admitting "I'd love to be an icon/Superstrong, obnoxious little moron/Hey, look at me, I'm smilin'." It's nice to know the "boy in the box" also has a sense of humor.

The midtempo numbers are similarly effective, but it's on the disc's dramatic finales that Hart's talents rise eloquently above the mainstream. "Slowburn" is a moody, Elton-John-meets-Sting ballad elegantly arranged around Hart's piano and Gerald Albright's souful sax. It flows right into the dreamily evocative instrumental "Ballade for Nien Cheng," closing Bang! on a quietly reflective note. In the hands of a lesser artist, this change of tone could have easily come across as sophomoric or self-indulgent. But Hart turns it into one of the disc's most shimmering moments.

The clean, punchy production throughout *Bang!* only serves to heighten the appeal of the most gratifying Corey Hart release to date.

-Scott Belford



Died Pretty: Every Brilliant Eye Beggars Banquet/RCA 2092-2-H (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 45:33

Died Pretty has been lurking around since the mid-'80s, churning up a slightly dark reputation along the way. There's still an anguished, brooding tilt to Every Brilliant Eye, the Australian quintet's latest disc, but ulti-

mately a triumphant streak as well. Even the lyrically bleak "Whitlam Square" (where singer Ronald Peno brays, "In a world full of fear/I'm in a world full of sadness here") features an uplifting rhythmic backup. "The Underbelly" is exposed by an ominous beginning before its dynamic buildup of drums and piano

reaches a soul-cleansing climax.

A sense of terror—and escape from it—often pervades the group's music, as Died Pretty takes its Velvet Underground roots and exorcises them with punklike urgency. There's a '60s swirl to many songs, like "Sight Unseen," with its steady beat, buoyant bass, and enveloping organ. Yet (coincidental to the disc being recorded in Southern California) there's also a Western flavor—akin to the sound of bands like True West, the Long Ryders, and Dream Syndicate—in songs like "Herr Godiva" and "Prayer."

Guitarist Brett Myers has the ability to steer the band in various musical directions, as when he turns from electric to acoustic strumming on the disc's most memorable track, "Face Toward the Sun." That trance-inducing song rides a soothing vocal by Pena and ghostly violin by J'Anna Jacoby, one of four extra musicians drafted for this fine session.

—Paul Robicheau

9 PERFORMANCE 4 SOUND QUALITY

Zydeco Vol. 1 (The Early Years) Arhoolie CD 307 (AAD) 1959–62 (1989) Disc time: 64:33

Zydeco, the hot-blooded hybrid of Cajun music, rhythm & blues, and rock'n'roll that flows mostly from Louisiana's Gulf Coast region, is as rich and distinctive as any indigenous American music form. Fueled with lively accordion riffs and snappy washboard rhythms that make your feet want to move, zydeco's recent flirtations with pop music have opened up a whole new audience and brand new possibilities for its practitioners.

You can pick up any disc by, say, Buckwheat Zydeco and hear just how infectious this foot-stompin', hand-clappin' music can be when recorded under ideal studio conditions. But real students of zydeco, or listeners who want to hear and learn about its roots, will find more value in this disc, which contains some of the first live recordings of zydeco made mostly in beer joints and house parties in Houston and southwest Louisiana. Sonically speaking, all 19 tracks are raw and rough around the edges. But that's understandable when you consider the earliest track, "Bon Ton Roulet," by Clarence Garlow, dates back to 1949, and that most of the tracks are from 1961 and 1962.

The Garlow tune, plus Willie Green's "Jole Blonde" and Clifton Chenier's "Louisiana Stomp" and "Clifton's Blues," are the most embracing tunes on Zydeco. Bare-boned deliveries beautifully reveal the earliest details of the music form. But then again, almost every tune included on the disc provides an authentic account of zydeco's beginnings, from "Allons a Lafayette" (McZiel & Gernger) to "They Call Me Good Rockin" (Herbert Sam).

No anthology as good as this one should be without an equally superb set of liner notes to shed added light on the music and provide a critical perspective of the artists. Chris Strachwitz's mini-history of zydeco as a genre is invaluable because it accomplishes both criteria in splendid style.

-Robert Santelli



Lowen & Navarro: Walking on a Wire Chameleon D2-74828 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 41:14

Duo singing. It's a beautiful thing—and a wondrous rarity when you think about it. You've got the Everlys. Hall & Oates. Marvin and Tammi. (Actually, Marvin and anybody.) Something magical can happen if the tandem blend works. And Lowen & Navarro have got the magic.

Eric Lowen and Dan Navarro have been kicking around L.A. as songwriters, separately and together, for the better half of the last decade. Their songs have been recorded by the Bangles, Pat Benatar, and Dave Edmunds, to name a few. But their own low-key approach on Walking on a Wire, produced cleanly and directly by Jim Scott, may be the ultimate

showcase for the team both as writers and performers.

The songs are built around acoustic guitars, augmented by an upright acoustic bass, subtle drums, and cello to complement the lyrical moods. The sonic sparsity gives the dual harmonies plenty of room to soar, as they do in "Somewhere Far Away." And the title track captures a sense of a delicate emotional teetering, whether it's about politics or the romantic ties that bind.

The forward motion of "The Spell You're Under" extends hands of hope and promise, while longings for home and sense of place carry "Seven Bridges." The team's recording of their own "We Belong"—with an understated arrangement and contrapuntally intense vocals—eclipses the over-blown Spectorian hit version recorded in 1981 by Benatar. There's a breezy, uplifting drive behind "C'est la Vie" and "She Said No," where lines of self-effacing laughter leap over the pop angst contained in the shambles of shattered romance.

In Walking on a Wire, Lowen & Navarro straddle that elusive line between folk and rock for a debut that matches melancholy introspection with sparkling wit and a sense of perseverance.

—Darryl Morden

8 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Texas Midgets: Man with the X-Ray Eyes Mad Rover MR 1809-2 (ADD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 48:06

Texas Midgets are as oddball as their name, yet the band makes exhilarating music—a challenging brew of performance poetry, manic R&B, catchy pop tunes, and alternative ballads. First up is "Post 61," a bizarre poem recited over a pseudo free-jazz backing. "Tyrannosaurus Rex" is finger-popping beat poetry accompanied by bass, harmonica, and Shelley Burns' ultra-cool refrain: "I'm not in it for money/I'm not in it for sex/I'm just hopelessly devoted/To Tyrannosaurus Rex." The supple synthesizer refrain and quirky castanet make the ballad "Everything I Want" a delicious pop tune. And the scary, ominous lyrics of the title track are offset by a catchy riff with reggae style horn breaks and synthesizer fills.

Yet the Midgets also rock with the best of them, favoring a driving, acoustic, R&B sound dominated by harp. "Pirate Radio," the harsh thrash groove of "Edge of the World," the mean "Who Do You Believe," and the wicked slide of "F-Flat Shuffle" announce a band that surely creates mayhem on the dance floor.

The Midgets also have a sense of humor, as displayed on "Easy Street." This is a hip parody of the distinctive sound of the Rolling Stones and a put-down of the hype that surrounded the *Steel Wheels* junket ("Everything's sugar-coated on Easy Street").

Texas Midgets may be obscure, but they deserve recognition. They also know how to mix things up enough to defy all labels—an important quality in these days of pop homogenity. *Man with the X-Ray Eyes* is a disc to grow into with increasing delight.

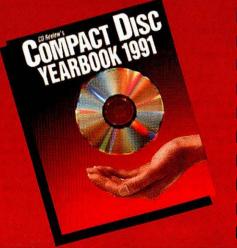
-David Lewis

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Rod Stewart: Every Picture Tells a

Mobile Fidelity UDCD 532 (AAD, 1971, 40:52)

PERFORMANCE: 10 SOUND: 8

Supertramp: Breakfast in America Mobile Fidelity UDCD 534 (AAD, 1979, 46:01) SOUND: 9 PERFORMANCE: 9

Someone at Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab has my number. The audiophile label's choices for its Ultradisc gold series have been irreproachable, as these two new reissues illustrate.

In the case of Every Picture Tells a Story, Rod Stewart set a standard that anyone would have trouble maintaining. From the title track to "Maggie May" to "Mandolin Wind" to "Reason to Believe," Rod the Mod screamed, crooned, twisted, and shouted his scratchy-throated way into rock's hall of fame. Nearly 20 years later, every cut holds up.

The recording was somewhat grungy to begin with, and even this gold-disc reissue doesn't hide the slight tape hiss or completely eliminate grime. But MFSL's deft remastering touch has toned down the background noise (compared to PolyGram's reissue) to as clean a state as possible without losing that appealing raunch. At the same time, the definition in the instruments has been improved without taking away from Stewart's upfront voice.

Breakfast in America, meanwhile, captures Supertramp at its most accessible. The by-now tired "The Logical Song" was the first hit from this 1979 album, and a pair of strong singles followed it up the charts-the pained "Goodbye Stranger" and the soaring "Take the Long Way Home." The desperate "Oh Darling," the tonguein-cheek title track, and the gentle kissoff "Casual Conversations" also hold up well. And for most of us, is the aptly titled "Just Another Nervous Wreck" any less fitting today than it was 11 years ago?

Sonically, Breakfast didn't have as much room for improvement as Every Picture. Nevertheless, Mobile Fidelity has enhanced the original's somewhat flat dynamics to correct the one problem area of an already sweetsounding recording.

Bangles: Greatest Hits Columbia/CBS CK 46125 (AAD, 1984-88, 48:27) PERFORMANCE: 7 SOUND: 9

Greatest Hits chronicles the meteoric rise and sudden disintegration of the Bangles. Behind main vocalist Susanna Hoffs' squeaky/sultry voice, the quartet started out with a bang (the refreshing "Hero Takes a Fall" and "Going Down to Liverpool" from its debut); built up commercial steam with its second album (the perfect-forradio, harmonically rich "If She Knew What She Wants" and "Manic Mon**CAPSULE CRITIQUES** pop/rock

by Larry Canale

day" from Different Light); peaked with its soaring cover of Simon & Garfunkel's "Hazy Shade of Winter" (from the soundtrack to Less Than Zero); and faded quickly after its disappointing third album, Everything.

Besides presenting those highlights, this 14-cut CD also offers two "rarities"-a cover of the Grass Roots' "Where Were You When I Needed You" (the B-side to "Hero Takes a Fall") and the previously unreleased "Everything I Wanted." The latterwritten by singer/songwriter duo Lowen & Navarro-was originally intended as the title track to Everything.

While Greatest Hits enhances the music with bright, open sound and detailed liner notes, the total package amounts to a too-short day at the beach. It was loads of fun while it lasted, but looking back, it sort of blends in with all the other fun days on the sand.

Poco: Crazy Loving/The Best of Poco 1975-1982 MCA MCAD-42323 (AAD, 1975-82, 56:10) PERFORMANCE: 8 SOUND: 8

You can learn plenty about country/ rock pioneers Poco by checking out Crazy Loving. First, yes-the band was named after Pogo of the comic strips, as the liner notes tell us. Second, you may have lost track after a while, but the group was home for a slew of major country/rock players: Buffalo Springfield alumni Richie Furay and Jim Messina; steel guitarist Rusty Young and lead guitarist Paul Cotton; Eagle-to-be Randy Meisner and his replacement (in both Poco and the Eagles), Timothy B. Schmit. Most importantly, Crazy Loving points out that Poco produced a wealth of easy, melodic, country-flavored songs.

'Crazy Love" and "Heart of the Night" are the well-known hits, but the Everlys' "The Price of Love," Schmit's "Keep on Tryin'," and Cotton's "Too Many Nights Too Long" are equally memorable. The sonics are crisp, with guitar-picking and vocals coming off as especially bright and distinct.

David Essex: Rock On Columbia/CBS CK 32560 (AAD, 1973, 35:00) PERFORMANCE: 5 SOUND: 5

The post-psychedelic "Rock On," the title track here, is a '70s icon, and "On and On" is an appealingly odd

ballad. Yet most of this CD is either derivative ("Lamplight" owes a great debt to Leon Russell's "Tightrope," "Ocean Girl" is primitive reggae, and the Bowie "tribute" "We're All Insane' seems silly by now), or overblown (the rock-opera treatment of Simon & Garfunkel's "For Emily, Whenever I May Find Her" or the out-of-tune "Bring in the Sun"). The end result might provide a kick for nostalgia-seekers, but it's also about as hip as the white bellbottoms David Essex is wearing on the back of the CD booklet.

Bob's Your Uncle: Tale of 2 Legs Doctor Dream DDCD 9035 (AAD, 1990, 38:27) PERFORMANCE: 7 SOUND: 9

If you like the punchy pop/rock of 10,000 Maniacs or Blondie, give Bob's Your Uncle a listen. A Canadian quintet

man'').



Tale of 2 Legs, produced by the band and Craig Burner, boasts a very forward sound-well-detailed and upclose. The only flaw is an occasional imbalance: a buried guitar or a faraway harmonica. Otherwise, Bob's Your Uncle (that's a British phrase for "everything's fine").

pop experiment ("Suburban Cave-

Beatles: Live at the Star-Club in Hamburg, Germany Masters MACD 61021 (import) (ADD, 1962, 23:15) PERFORMANCE: 5 SOUND: 1

The Beatles Live is a very short import that sounds horrendously sloppy and offers precious little annotation. It was bootlegged in Germany in 1962 by a man named Adrian Barber, who "captured" the Fab Four playing early standards such as "Roll Over Beethoven," "Kansas City," and "Be-

Bop-a-Lula." At this stage, the Beatles weren't doing many originals at club dates (a raucous "I Saw Her Standing There" is the exception here). But it's neat to hear (and we use that term loosely) the group in its formative years. If you're a Beatles fanatic who will search this out no matter what it sounds like, you'll find Paul McCartney in amazingly mature voice, George Harrison playing his patented guitar leads, and John Lennon tossing off some classic rock screams. The rowdy group/audience banter between and during songs makes it all the more authentic.

At least the makers of this disc-the booklet simply says "Masters," from Holland-don't try to pass off Live as anything but what it is. In fact, the brief notes offer this meek justification: "In spite of the quality we thought it was a good idea to release this historical recording on CD."

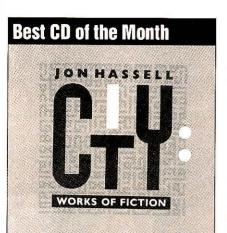
Neil Hogan: A Beatles Collection Joplin & Sweeney JS 102-CD (DDD, 1989, 46:00) PERFORMANCE: 5 SOUND: 8

Artfully Beatles Artful Balance ABD-7210 (AAD, 1986, 52:11) PERFORMANCE: 5 SOUND: 9

Reinterpreting a Beatles song is an obvious way to enhance an album. But these two releases take that formula to an extreme, filling entire discs with Lennon & McCartney music. Both CDs sound fine (although Artfully Beatles is inconsistent in a couple of spots, due to a range of artists, and Neil Hogan's guitar is occasionally too tightly miked). Musically however, neither is particularly brilliant.

On A Beatles Collection, Hogan gives sensitive readings to 21 different songs. He's a talented acoustic guitarist, and several of his medleys are charming and/or interesting (such as "I'll Follow the Sun/From Me to You/ All My Loving"). Unfortunately, his style is soft, straightaway, and unadventurous-which is probably why Collection is great for quiet background music but short on spunk.

Artfully Beatles collects 12 cuts from seven jazz and new age performers. "Here, There, and Everywhere" in the hands of Randy Waldman (with David Boruff) is pretty, and so is Boruff's "The Long and Winding Road." Australian guitarist Tommy Emmanuel also comes through with an innovative rendition of "Michelle" and a unique bluegrass version of "Lady Madonna." Yet generally, the jazzy arrangements-such as on Boruff's pretentiously funky "Get Back"-do absolutely nothing for Beatles classics. Will someone tell Artful Balance that "Lucy in the Sky" (Dicola & Young) is not a new age song, "She Loves You" (Waldman) is not solo piano material-and "Norwegian Wood" (Joe Gilman) is not cocktail lounge music please? Please?



Jon Hassell: City—Works of Fiction Opal/Warner Bros. 26153-2 (ADD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 56:11

10 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

10 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

Jon Hassell: Vernal Equinox Lovely Music LCD 1021 (AAD) 1977 (90) Disc time: 51:48

Jon Hassell's music is a high-tech merging of Indonesian and African traditions, mixed and layered through digital techniques and coupled with his own Indian-derived trumpet playing, which is, again, electronically processed. But on *City—Works of Fiction*, he adds the U.S. into his world mix in an unprecedented way.

After making music based on samples of pygmies and Senegalese drummers, Hassell's new sound might be likened to a sort of world music hip-hop, postulating an analogy between urban street culture and an African village in a Bladerumner-type future. For instance, on "Voiceprint (Blind from the Facts)," he samples a phrase from a Public Enemy album and of Masai warriors chanting "rib-it, rib-it" in digital cut-ups. It sputters and crashes, creating complex polyrhythms out of the digital samples played by electroacoustic percussionist Adam Rudolph and keyboardist Jeff Rona. It wouldn't be too far afield from Public Enemy's own recent CD, Fear of a Black Planet.

"Mombasa," on the other hand, was inspired directly from his work with the African percussion ensemble Farafina. Here, Hassell accents the relentless percussion drive with ethereal metal shards of sound and throaty basslines from Daniel Schwartz. He contrasts this storm with long, airy trumpet lines that seem to fade into vapor.

Hassell has always been an improviser. Although he's usually worked in the Indian improvisational tradition, he also owes a debt to jazz. On "Pagan," he pays tribute to Miles Davis. The keyboard stabs, the dark, deep funk bass, the insistent, percolating percusion, and the chopped wah-wah rhythm guitar wouldn't be out of place on Davis' 1970s recordings *On the Corner* or *Get Up with It*.

City—Works of Fiction is a major statement from Hassell, a musician whose influence extends to longtime collaborator Brian Eno as

R E V I E W S

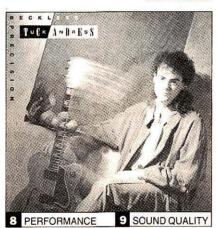
well as Talking Heads and Peter Gabriel, with whom he has recorded. But this is his first real stylistic departure in almost a decade. From the psychedelic bursts of "The City of Red Dust" to the urban voodoo menace of "Rain," he's created a soundscape for the underbelly of the global village, a world of virtual reality where everything comes together in the most unusual way.

To see how far Hassell has come, you need only listen to *Vernal Equinox*, his solo debut recently issued on disc for the first time. Released in 1977, this recording would go on to influence Eno, whose subsequent association with Hassell has sometimes overshadowed the fact that Hassell was working on this sound long before their collaboration, *Fourth World: Possible Musics Vol. I* in 1980.

In its sparse, drone electronics, you can hear the true source of Hassell's unusual trumpet sound—the slurring and bending of notes into a breathlike murmur that he transmits through his horn. On the ragalike title track, Hassell weaves a long, sinewy trail across the slow percussion of David Rosenboom and Nana Vasconcelos, with a synthesizer substituting for a tamboura drone. On "Toucan Ocean," his trumpet flutters in the electronic wind of Rosenboom's synthesizer manipulations.

Vernal Equinox holds up well on CD, with a natural, unprocessed sound. The pastoral, environmental expanses also provide a sharp counterpoint to the urban aggression of City, but it's consistent with Hassell's ongoing explorations of a true world music sound.

-John Diliberto



Tuck Andress: Reckless Precision Windham Hill WD-0124 (DDD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 49:50

With her husky, gospel-influenced voice and showstopping bravado, Patti Cathcart has emerged as the star of husband/wife jazz act Tuck & Patti. But guitarist Tuck Andress is no silent partner, a point made clear by the solo numbers that have become unexpected highlights of the duo's live concerts and driven home by his engaging solo album, Reckless Precision.

Armed with only his 1953 Gibson L-5 electric guitar, Andress plucks, strums, and thumps through these 10 instrumentals with a dazzling blend of urgency and intimacy that owes debts to hero Wes Montgomery. Not since Stanley Jordan's *Magic Touch* has one

guitar player sounded so much like two. Digitally recorded live in the studio without overdubs, Andress swings through "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" (medleyed with "If I Only Had a Brain"), Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine," and Luiz Bonfa's "Manha de Carvaval" with a fluid flurry of hooks and harmonics, gleefully improvising without overpowering the charm of the original melodies. He even gives the rock'n'roll warhorse "Louie Louie" a fresh, funky reading that rivals George Benson's cover of the Monkees' "Last Train to Clarksville" for honors as most unlikely jazz instrumental.

Cathcart may be absent, but her influence can be felt in the romantic, optimistic overtones of the material, which includes "Body and Soul," Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror," and such Andress originals as "Sweet P" and "Grooves of Joy." The latter is the album's riskiest venture, an uneven collection of unfinished tunes edited into a choppy 11-minute collage that never quite lives up to the imaginative titles of the song fragments ("Godzilla Meets the Infinitely Variegated Homogeneity of Life," "Tricks Thoughtful Terry Taught Thankful Tuck").

But "Grooves of Joy" is merely a daring miscue, not a flamboyant flop. Compared to most of today's guitar heroes, Andress is more interested in winning listeners over with his distinctive playing style than dazzling them with his blinding speed. That admirable attitude makes *Reckless Precision* an impressive artistic statement rather than just a self-indulgent side project.

—David Okamoto



Miles Davis: Pangaea Columbia/CBS C2K 46115 (ADD) 1975 (90) Disc time: 88:08 (2 discs)

Miles Davis' Bitches Brew staked the beachhead of electric jazz in 1970, but it was the live 1975 Pangaea that strode across the landscape like a relentless juggernaut. Pangaea was the Holy Grail of fusion, a rare and expensive Japanese import on CBS/Sony, now released in this country for the first time.

In light of the retro-bop revisionism and lite-jazz of the 1980s, *Pangaea* is a catharsis for the 1990s. It was Miles' last recording before his five-year hiatus, and by that time he had been perfecting his free jazz/rock fusion for nearly a decade, taking equal parts of Jimi Hendrix, Sly & the Family Stone, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, then merging them with

JAZZ

his own improvising sensibilities. While most fusion artists were reducing their music to a slick, easily digested formula, Miles kept making it grittier and more spontaneous

Pangaea has only two pieces, "Zimbabwe" and "Gondwana." "Zimbabwe" starts at full throttle, the rhythm section locked around drummer Al Foster's dark funk groove, with the twin guitars of Pete Cosey and Reggie Lucas churning in an electric cauldron. Lucas' guitar slides through phase shifters, fuzz boxes, and volume pedals in a seamless glissando of snakelike sound while Cosey chops his chords with the wah-wah pedal. Beside that, Davis growls and spurts out trumpet lines, filtering his sound with a wahwah pedal that acts like an electronic plunger mute. The band shifts grooves with startling intuition, suddenly dropping out from under Sonny Fortune's tenor solo, leaving him in an extended free-fall, before another seemingly arbitrary phrase leads the ensemble back in with a roar

Miles also orchestrates some dark and atmospheric passages, with Mtume's percussion gurgling like a stream while Davis and the guitarists float in psychedelic space. But soon the energy and the rhythms return in a dark African polyrhythmic dervish, with Mtume fluttering around on congas while Al Foster holds down a dark center groove and Michael Henderson takes his Motown bass lines into a space warp.

"Gondwana" is a bit more languid and introspective. Miles turns in some of his most poignant playing about two-thirds of the way through, evoking some post-bop modality with a bluesy solo over a straight-ahead groove.

The energy, anger, and raw power of *Pangaea* haven't dimmed in 15 years. For Miles, this was no doubt just another night on the road, but clearly something special happened. Just compare it to *Agharta*, recorded earlier the same day. The contrast in energy and cohesion is startling.

-John Diliberto



Roy Hargrove: Diamond in the Rough Novus/RCA 3082-2-N (DDD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 62:54

Just three years ago, Wynton Marsalis discovered Roy Hargrove and encouraged him to sit in with his band. On *Diamond in the Rough*,

Hargrove makes his debut as a leader, heading a quintet and a sextet on a set of hard-bop originals and four jazz standards ("Ruby My Dear," "Whisper Not," "Easy to Remember," and "Wee"). The music itself isn't startlingly innovative, but the 20-year-old trumpeter possesses an original sound that has touches of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard without owing allegiance to any one role model. Although most young players have difficulty expressing honest emotion on a ballad—preferring to play double-time runs—Hargrove is content to let the melody speak for itself, as on "Easy to Remember."

Of Hargrove's sidemen, altoist Antonio Hart (who occasionally recalls Phil Woods and Cannonball Adderley) has the promise to be a major stylist in the future, while the Coltrane-ish tenor of Ralph Moore and the alternating pianos of veteran John Hicks and youngster Geoffrey Keezer (who contributed three of the songs) are in fine form. The recording quality is strong and the music is consistently well-played and swinging.

-Scott Yanow



Ivo Perelman: Ivo K2B2 2769 (AAD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 48:01

Saxophonist Ivo Perelman's debut, Ivo, is one of the most provocative jazz releases of the year. The musicians are respectable—from veterans Peter Erskine (drums), Airto Moreira (percussion), and Flora Purim (vocals) to relative newcomers John Patitucci (bassist for Chick Corea's band) and pianist Eliane Elias. Perelman inspires his cohorts into giving emotional, stormy, and vibrant performances. Playing mostly traditional Brazilian children's songs, he lays these slight melodies to waste with a powerful sax tone that owes as much to Sonny Rollins as to Albert Ayler with a bit of fellow South American Gato Barbieri's pure fire thrown in.

Perelman's solos are long, rambling trips, full of slurs, slides, and beautifully twisted melodies that writhe like a vine crawling up a tree. He's not from the bop-revisionist school, but harkens back to the freer modal jazz of the '60s. Rhythms shift and shudder, sometimes storm with kinetic drive (as on "The Carnation and the Rose," with Erskine's non-stop groove) and sometimes disintegrate into a free-for-all (as on "Slaves of Jo"). There's also a romantic side to Perelman. His two

moody ballad duets with Elias bristle with a smoldering passion.

Purim turns in a startling performance, playfully fluttering around the lyrics before turning them into free-form scat singing. Even the reggae groove of "The Circle Dance" is turned into a free-wheeling exploration. Airto bounces percussion effects like starbursts, framing Perelman's solo.

Perelman's unusual double bass formation, with Patitucci and Buell Neidlinger switching off on acoustic and electric basses, makes for an active bottom-end sound.

-John Diliberto



Ricky Ford: Manhattan Blues Candid CCD 79036 (ADD) 1989 (89) Disc time: 59:59

Ricky Ford has long been taken for granted. Now 36, his style on tenor is most influenced by the two magnificent tenors of Duke Ellington's orchestra—Ben Webster and Paul Gonsalves, although there are times when he also recalls Dexter Gordon. Ford's stints with the Mercer Ellington, Charles Mingus, and Abdullah Ibrahim bands gave him a chance to show off his versatility, but his thick-toned and hard-driving style hasn't been particularly in vogue and, despite his talents, he's always been underrated.

Manhattan Blues serves as a good introduction for those not familiar with Ford's abilities. The material ranges from Thelonious Monk ("In Walked Bud") and the standard ballad "Misty" to six of his own originals, including the happy but tricky "Bop Nouveau," a melancholy "Portrait of Mingus," and the struttin "Manhattan Blues."

Ford isn't alone on this well-recorded quartet date. Pianist Jaki Byard—a veritable encyclopedia of jazz who can play in any style from stride to free—sticks mostly to the world of bebop for this session, often hinting at Monk. Drummer Ben Riley, who played with Thelonious in the 1960s, is alert in support of the soloists, which includes octogenarian bassist Milt Hinton.

Despite the influences, Ford still manages to come up with his own sound. The closing track is a perfect example; on Miles Davis' "Half Nelson," his tone is unlike any of the John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, or Grover Washington Jr. clones who often get more publicity.

-Scott Yanow



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6/8/90	Lakewood Amphitheater Atlanta, Georgia	7/6/90	Wolf Trap Vienna, Virginia	7/26/90	Greek Thealer Los Angeles, California	8/11/90	Aqua Fest (Rockstage Auditorium) Austin, Texa
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6/14/90	Peacock Pavilion Cincinnati, Ohio	7/8/90	Albright-Knox Butfalo, New York	7/28/90	Britt Pavilion Jacksonville, Oregon	8/18/90	Performing Arts Center Lenox, Massachusetts
6/17/90	Fiddler's Green Englewood, Colorado	7/13/90	Ravinia Festival Highland Park, Illinois	7/29/90	Parkers Seattle, Washington	8/19/90	Jones Beach Theater Wantaugh, New York
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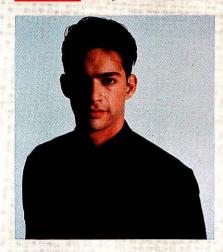
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JAZZ

F Y I Harry Connick, Jr.



Remember the old Sam Phillips/Elvis Presley story? The one that has Phillips telling his Sun Studios receptionist, "You find me a young, good-looking white boy who can sing and move like a black man and I'll show you the biggest thing to ever hit show business"?

To bring that scenario up to date, try this: Show me a young, good-looking kid with sex appeal and pop smarts who can play jazz piano like Monk, croon like Sinatra, dress like a cross between a GQ model and a rock'n'roll star, and command the stage like some strange combination of Liza Minnelli and George Burns, and I'll show you Harry Connick Jr.

At the tender age of 22, Connick possesses all of the above qualities and more. A child prodigy who performed with jazz great Eubie Blake at age 9 and later studied piano with Ellis Marsalis (father of Wynton, Branford, and Delfeayo) and James Booker, Connick had a recording contract with Columbia while still in his teens. He released his self-titled debut in 1987, and followed it up with a disc named after his age at the time, 20.

But it was last year's Grammy-winning When Harry Met Sally that was the turning point. Now a gold record—with sales in excess of 600,000—the disc was a major crossover sensation, proving Connick's uncanny ability to attract a mainstream pop audience without alienating (so far, anyway) hard-core jazz fans. Now he's released not one but two follow-up albums at the same time: an orchestral vocal disc called We Are in Love and a trio recording titled Lofty's Roach Shuffle. "I'm a singer and I'm also a piano player," he says, "and the way I sing and play are two completely different styles.

"The trio album is all original music. The other album is all singing. It's [got] 12 songs, with 10 originals. So they're both

pretty much original albums. I've always been a composer—I just didn't put the songs on my last two albums."

In the midst of all this activity, Connick is being celebrated by promoters and press alike as "the next big thing." Pretty heady stuff for a southern boy barely out of this teens. But he seems to be pulling it off effortlessly.

Born and reared in New Orleans, Connick began absorbing the area's rich musical heritage at an early age, soaking up R&B, bebop, and honky tonk. The music that so influenced his youth also dominates his taste today. Thelonious Monk, Art Tatum, Louis Armstrong, Erroll Garner, Count Basie, Bing Crosby, and Frank Sinatra are among the luminaries that Connick often quotes.

Yet he's also been known to inject his live performances with a sense of rock'n'roll anarchy and barroom bravado. During a recent concert in Virginia, he paced the floor and told jokes, did impressions of George Bush and Dan Quayle, crooned like Sinatra, traded instruments with drummer Shannon Powell and bassist Ben Wolfe, and even did a soft shoe across the stage. On a romping version of "Shake, Rattle, and Roll," you half expected him to kick his plano bench out from underneath him, Jerry Lee Lewis-style, and stomp the keys with his foot. (He re--Scott Belford frained.)

RICARDO SILVEIRA



Amazon fecreto

Hank Crawford/Jimmy McGriff: On the Blue Side

7 PERFORMANCE

Milestone MCD-9177 (DDD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 40:32

Hank Crawford's soulful alto has been a welcome attraction ever since his early days with Ray Charles. Crossing over the boundaries of bop, R&B, and blues, he's a strong jazz player with a highly appealing sound of his own. Jimmy McGriff's swinging mastery of the Hammond B-3 organ is a given. Crawford and McGriff's third album for Milestone, On the Blue Side, breaks no new ground, but it's certainly not stale, thanks to high-level musicianship, emotional intensity, and pure joy of the performances.

Whether the pair is playing one of the three medium-tempo blues here, the countryish "Tuff," a lush rendition of the ancient ballad "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," or the upbeat "You're the One," Crawford and Mc-Griff show plenty of soul. With the steady support of drummer Vance James and several tasteful solos (in a Wes Montgomery vein) by guitarist Jimmy Ponder, this well-recorded soul jazz session is consistently enjoyable and swinging. -Scott Yanow

9 PERFORMANCE

8 SOUND QUALITY

9 SOUND QUALITY

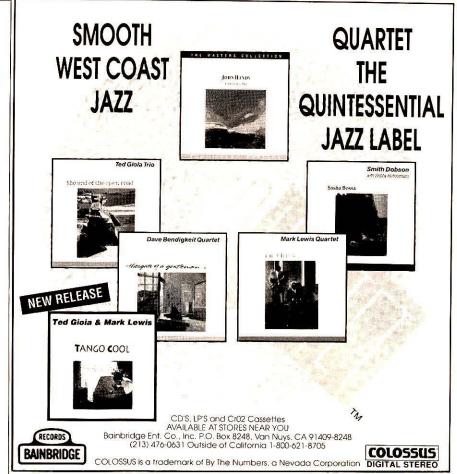
Ornette Coleman: New York Is Now Blue Note CDP 84287 (ADD) 1968 (90) Disc time: 47:11

8 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

Ornette Coleman: Love Call Blue Note CDP 84356 (ADD) 1968 (90) Disc time: 53:08

Ornette Coleman's new free-jazz style of the 1960s featured saxophone improvisations full of happy and passionate melodies that were generally unrelated to the main theme. No chord changes were used and the rhythm section kept up a strong pulse (occasionally shifting patterns) rather than stating a metronomic rhythm.

By 1962, Coleman's original quartet—with trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden, and either Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins on drums-was history. Three years later, he reemerged with a trio (bassist David Izenson and drummer Charles Moffett). By 1968, when these two CDs were recorded during the same two sessions, Coleman was in the process of



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forming his third memorable group. He had just joined forces with the fiery tenor of Dewey Redman, and for these sets he utilized two of John Coltrane's former sidemen, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones. Redman could play a bit violently (witness his entrance on "The Garden of Souls") but he mastered Coleman's approach while retaining his own tough Texas tenor sound.

New York Is Now includes an extra alternate take of "Broadway Blues" and an appearance by Coleman on his percussive atonal violin during the somewhat humorous "We Now Interrupt for a Commercial." The Love Call CD supplements the original four-song program with previously unissued versions of "Check Out Time" and the title cut, in addition to a rare version of "Just for You" (from an obscure anthology). Since Coleman switches to his primitive trumpet for the two versions of "Love Call" and "Just for You," the edge goes to New York Is Now, but these complementary discs (they have the same liner notes) really belong together. Remixed from the original analog four-track tapes, this music -Scott Yanow has never sounded better.

6 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

Smith Dobson: Sasha Bossa Quartet Q-1004CD (AAD) 1988 (90) Disc time: 41:17

Sasha Bossa contains not nearly enough solid, kick-ass soloing, inventive comping, or cogent ensemble-ladened passages from pianist/vocalist Smith Dobson and his band. Outside of a few scattered moments, the disc

never hits noteworthy stride, mainly because the core group rarely seems to play—or sing with measurable authority. At times the arrangements sound forced, falsely emphatic, and frighteningly close to a lounge act. Mark Lewis, an alto saxophonist who appears on the title track and the much-recorded Burke/Van Heusen ballad "It Could Happen to You," improves matters a bit. But ultimately, the only attractions here are vibist Bobby Hutcherson and drummer Eddie Marshall-and Marshall plays on just three of seven cuts.

Hutcherson, fortunately, appears on all but two pieces. He's in peak form in his phrasing, resonance, sense of timing, and tone. On Dobson's original ballad, "Love's Mirror Image," we begin to sense the vibist's significance despite the leader's lesser execution on piano. On another Dobson original, "Ottowa on," the pianist shows some sense of dexterity, the first sign of life. Combined with Jeff Carney's solid bass playing, they manage to provide Hutcherson with some footing and, thus, allow his solo to get off the ground.

It's no wonder that Hutcherson's name appears on the cover of the disc. He's the only reason-albeit a good one-to add Sasha -Jon W. Poses Bossa to your collection.

on 10 CDs

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Rique Pantoja & Chet Baker

Tropical Storm/WEA WH55155 (AAD, 1984/85/87, 31:07)

PERFORMANCE: 4 SOUND: 6

In the flood of Chet Baker albums released since his death in May 1988, this is the one to buy last. Off-the-shelf Brazilian MOR is not the context for Baker. His art is a delicate balance—it often skirts the edges of self-pity as it probes for epiphanies, but Baker almost always ends up persuading you of his ineffable personal truth. Here, you don't believe him.

Much of the problem resides with the co-leader. Keyboardist Rique Pantoja assembles trivial ditties from the devices that characterize this genre at its most conventional: prominent but finally static Brazilian rhythms, liberally sprinkled with shakers and bells; electric piano fills with a saccharine aftertaste; an echo that dissolves Baker's horn and sibilant vocals in a haze. Baker, who has been accompanied by some of the greatest jazz musicians of the 20th century, is slumming here.

Franco Ambrosetti: Movies, Too Enja R2 79616 (DDD, 1988, 49:27) PERFORMANCE: 8 SOUND: 7

Who among us, pretensions to hipness notwithstanding, doesn't harbor a secret weakness for movie music? Is it the reenforcement of visual imagery that enables movie music—often featherweight kitsch—to attach itself to the emotions, and, once heard and seen, to lurk in the corridors of the subconscious?

Franco Ambrosetti sets movie music free. He may start with nostalgia ("My Man" from The Great Ziegfeld) or camp ("Theme from Peter Gunn"), but he finds his own significance through directed reimagining. He gets a lot of help. His band deals in improvised surgical intelligence (guitarist John Scofield, pianist Geri Allen, saxophonist Greg Osby) and airy energy (bassist Michael Formanek, drummer Daniel Humair). Franco's fluegelhorn is crafty, elastic, and economical; he discovers tangents to songs as silly as "What's New Pussycat" that yield adult cultural ironies. As Peter Ruedi says in the liner notes, "The old myths hibernate in the pathos of trivial forms.

Sonny Rollins: Falling in Love with Jazz

Milestone MCD-9179-2 (DDD, 1989, 46:59) PERFORMANCE: **7** SOUND: **8**

Sonny Rollins has not made a great tenor saxophone album in years. Perhaps it was a need (as he approached old age) for the adulation of the young that led him to reduce the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of his music to a lowest common denominator. Perhaps he sought the Fountain of Youth in the company of an electric guitar, an electric bass, and a synthesizer. Whatever the reasons for Rollins' choices, the results have not

CAPSULE CRITIQUES

Description

been fortunate. Where once there was an exhilarating unpredictability in his mastery and a vast, multilayered humor, there has recently been one-dimensionality and cynicism.

That said, we direct you to two cuts on Falling in Love with Jazz that break your heart because they offer a taste of all the great indispensable recordings Rollins could have made over the last 10 years. On "For All We Know" and "I Should Care," Rollins proves that the need and the artistry to communicate adult emotions is still within him. He chooses Branford Marsalis, Tommy Flanagan, and Jeff Watts for assistance. Sonny and Branford, tenors from the first and third bop generations, pass "I Should Care" back and forth until they have discovered and revealed the complexities of resignation at the core of the Sammy Cahn classic. On "For All We Know," they choose to bypass the poignance and instead use its melodic skeleton as a starting point for emancipated personal architecture.

The rating is for those two tunes. Program around the other five. You'll still get your money's worth.

Donald Byrd Sextet: Getting Down to Business

Landmark LCD-1523-2 (DDD, 1989, 55:44)

PERFORMANCE: 8 SOUND: 9

Donald Byrd was a boy wonder trumpet player before Wynton Marsalis was born. He broke in with the Jazz Messengers in the mid-'50s and was one of five or six who defined the 'Blue Note Sound' as it applied to trumpet. He came out of Clifford Brown, with some of that same monumental assurance and lyricism. That's why he played with Coltrane, Rollins, Monk, and Roach. Byrd was one of the cats.

Then he went away. He stayed busy. He earned a Ph.D. from Columbia; he got a pilot's license; he studied law; he became Chairman of the Black Music Department at Howard University; he made a jazz/rock album called Black Byrd that was at one time the largest-selling LP in Blue Note's history.

With Getting Down to Business, Byrd comes home. He wisely chooses to surround himself with world class mainstream talent—veterans like tenor extraordinaire Joe Henderson and drummer Al Foster, and young comers like alto Kenny Garrett and pianist Donald Brown. Byrd may not have

quite the same purity of tone and cleanedged articulation and sheer velocity of 35 years ago, but he possesses more than enough street smarts to compensate. On Henderson's blues "Around the Corner," his flow of ideas sustains the level of relaxed intensity established by Garrett; then he adds intrigues that culminate in crackling surprises. The recorded sound is vivid. The solos flat-out burn. Welcome back. Doc.

Guy Fricano: The New York Sessions

A.F.P. GF 81242 (AAD, 1987, 55:47) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 9

Guy Fricano plays jazz trumpet so commandingly, so resourcefully, so overwhelmingly competent that his anonymity outside Chicago can't last. And his band is a bitch. Guests Cedar Walton and Ron Carter are fully involved and play masterfully, and Chicago regulars Jeff Newell and Edward Petersen (reeds) and Robert Shy (drums) are ready for the fast company.

Fricano's open horn can lilt and sing ("Invitation"), or rocket into high note heaven ("Things Ain't What They Used to Be"). His approach to the Harmon mute is refreshingly individual ("I've Never Been in Love Before"). He studied composition under Gil Evans, so it's not surprising that his own pieces are ambitious and beautifully orchestrated ("Convolution," "Suspended Animation Adagio," and "Moderato").

The New York Sessions is generous eclecticism, fierce commitment, and sustained inspiration. The entire experience is greatly enhanced by the balanced, close-focus sound of engineer Alan Silverman.

JoAnne Brackeen: Live at Maybeck Recital Hall Vol. 1

Concord CCD-4409 (AAD, 1989, 63:14)

PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 10

Concord says that this release is the first in a series of solo piano performances captured live at a new venue in Berkeley, CA. The acoustics are the kind you wait years for, and if *Volume I* is any indication, devotees of pure, uncompromised jazz piano are in for some serious fun.

Among the pianists who are currently redefining the instrument's jazz boundaries, many are women: Geri Allen, Renee Rosnes, Francesca

Tanksley, Eliane Elias, and JoAnne Brackeen, one of the most fully accomplished players to emerge in the last 10 years. Live at Maybeck demonstrates that she's resoundingly, dazzingly up to the task of sustaining interest without a rhythm section. For more than an hour, she holds us rapt, with highly personal presentations of songs as old as Richard Rodgers' "Thou Swell" and Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band" (both from 1927) and as new as her own "Calling Carl," inspired by her decision to record this performance.

Brackeen's authoritative command reveals itself through subtle harmonic modifications ("The Most Beautiful Girl in the World"), metric complexity ("Curved Space"), and sophisticated sense of form ("Dr. Chu Chou"). Her treatments of gentler songs like "Yesterdays" and "My Foolish Heart," while ornately elaborated, are deeply felt.

Even if you don't like Brackeen, you will get off on the sensuous rewards of the recorded sound of this particular piano, textured and tangible in a space called the Maybeck Recital Hall.

John Zorn: Naked City Nonesuch 79238-2 (AAD, 1989, 55:14) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 9

If Franco Ambrosetti adopts wry perspectives on our closely held (even when trivial) myths, John Zorn explodes them. Movie music's most sinister messages are reduced to bits and pieces. Then Zorn splatters them in arbitrary order on a Jackson Pollocksized canvas and rubs your nose in them. Oddly enough, it's a fun ride. Zorn keeps you on the edge of your chair as only someone who is capable of anything can do.

The band is Zorn on alto, Bill Frisell on guitar. Wayne Horvitz on keyboards, Fred Frith on electric bass, and Joey Baron on drums. They are deadpan virtuosos who serve up the bizarre in outrageous variety: not just cut-to-cut pacing, but jolting shifts within tracks (even eight-second tracks). Henry Mancini's "A Shot in the Dark" slams us from Horvitz's bubbling, squeaking, groaning synth to Frisell's maniacally metronomic guitar raunch to the desperation of Zorn's hoarse alto wails. The moody, almost-straight rendition of the "Chinatown" theme lulls you, so that Zorn can then assault you with the shrieking nastiness of "Punk China Doll."

Between the cinematic referents, Zorn spaces his own songs as commentary. "N.Y. Flat Top Box" is exquisitely corny C&W interrupted by one-second noise insults. "Saigon Pickup" juxtaposes styles of music that never go together: synthesized love grunts/psychedelic guitar/C&W/more grunts/straight bop piano/random noise/R&B organ/delirious saxophone. They are the episodes of a nightmare from which Zorn seeks release through our participation.

Balfa, Savoy, & Menard: Under a Green Oak Tree

Arhoolie CD 312 (AAD, 1976, 59:34)
PERFORMANCE: 8 SOUND: 8

If you like your Cajun music raw and traditional, these classic songs and influential originals by three of southwest Lousiana's most respected musicians are enough to set your mind reeling with visions of balmy summer nights in a small bayou town. You can almost smell those crayfish boiling and feel the shuffle of dancers twirling across hardwood floors sprinkled in corn meal.

You won't find the polished, dizzying virtuosity that made younger bands like Beausoleil virtual superstars of Cajun chic a few years ago. No, fiddler Dewey Balfa, accordionist/fiddler Marc Savoy, and guitarist D.L. Menard teamed up for this surprisingly well-recorded session back in 1976—long before most outsiders had ever heard of blackened redfish, let alone the music.

Together, these well-seasoned artists convey the crusty country soul of their heritage without the bells and whistles that others use to gain a wider audience. Their voices are grainy and full of bare emotion. Their arrangements are sometimes slower and more stately than what you might be used to, and these guys aren't quite in tune by conventional standards. However, their rhythmic instincts are irreproachable, and they sing these time-honored tunes as only true Cajuns could. Several originals by Menard also illustrate why this gifted songwriter has been called the "Cajun Hank Williams." If you aren't already an aficionado of this type of music, the liner notes provide translations and information on the 19 selections.

Michael Doucet: Beau Solo Arhoolie CD 321 (AAD, 1989, 64:54) PERFORMANCE: 10 SOUND: 7

Whether he's fronting the rock group Cocteau (widely hailed as the "Cajun Grateful Dead"), making national waves with Beausoleil's nervy blend of Cajun authenticity, swamprock, and a bit of rhythm & blues, or adding electronics to traditional tunes with his most recent band Cajun Brew, Michael Doucet is a musical explorer. Beau Solo, however, proves that the master fiddler, accordion wizard, and vocalist can play straight classic Cajun with just as much energy and excitement as he gleans from his innovative variations on the Acadian aesthetic.

On this collection, he stands in acoustic solitude (save for the occasional sparse guitar accompaniment of David Doucet), performing everything from ancient French ballads sung a cappella, Cajun waltz medleys on accordion, and old Acadian fiddle tunes to originals composed convincingly enough to make you swear a song he wrote virtually yesterday had been handed down for generations. In every

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context, Doucet plays with a supreme level of skill and musicality, illustrating his status not only as one of the most influential artists of his generation, but as one of the finest and most inventive players in the history of this infectious musical style.

While the sound is generally clean and complementary to the various instrumental combinations he employs, the 22 tunes include some fiddle selections previously issued on a limited-edition cassette. This makes for inconsistencies in the production quality. Beau Solo also includes translations and plenty of interesting comments on the music from Doucet himself—an extra effort that makes the entire disc more entertaining and meaningful.

Hariprasad & Zakir Hussain: Venu Rykodisc RCD 20128 (AAD, 1974, 66:03) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 8

Although Indian tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain is undoubtedly better known in the U.S. because of his East/ West fusions with Mickey Hart, John McLaughlin, and Jan Garbarek, Hariprasad Chaurasia is really the star of this disc. *Venu*, in fact, is the ancient name for the bamboo flute (today more often called bansuri) that Chaurasia wields with such elegance and expressive genius.

The two artists join forces on this disc (with an unnamed tambura player) for an exceptional performace of "Rag Ahir Bhairav," recorded at a 1974 concert. This light classical piece combines the profound elements of "Rag Bhairav" with a lilting folk melody of the Ahir tribe. A beautiful and highly accessible rag, it's a mixture of romantic and devotional moods with a touch of mystery evoking the hush of the predawn hours.

The flutist manages to retain a sense of peace and gentleness even as he builds his swirling improvisations to a feverish pace during the first 30-minute cut, which contains the alap and jor portions of the rag accompanied only by the droning of the tambura. Then Hussain enters for the 36-minute finale, encompassing a slower, seven-beat rhythmic cycle and a set of high-speed variations in a complex, 16-beat cycle. Hussain's tabla tirades set fire to Chaurasia's melodic ideas, bringing the entire collaboration to a wonderful climax.

This live recording has occasional moans and comments from audience members that can be distracting during some of the quieter, more introspective moments. Still, the ambience and close-miked quality offers an admirable representation of the instruments and their players.

Disappearing World
Saydisc CD-SDL 376
(AAD, 1972-89, 76:56)
PERFORMANCE: 7 SOUND: 6

This disc presents a sampling of field recordings made as a result of the *Disappearing World* television series. Created in 1970, the program was designed to document societies or ways of life threatened with extinction. Over the years, an archive of more than 50 films resulted. By 1988, the series also had inspired a book, a photographic exhibition, and this soundtrack.

Rare recordings of indigenous performances from Laos, Mongolia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Hungary, Kurdistan, and the Sahar (among a great variety of other exotic places) make this a disc worth owning if you're interested in music that still exists in its purest state. In fact, it's almost a sin to even attempt to apply a performance rating to many of these cuts because they exemplify how inseparable music is from the rituals and everyday life of these non-industrialized societies.

Some presentations, however, translate better to recording than others. A young Masai woman singing of her lover-as she milks her husband's cows to the accompaniment of cattle bells and the sympathetic vocalizations of her friends-is hauntingly beautiful. On the other hand, excerpts of Masai manhood rites and war songs-with crowd noise and speech fragments acting as an intricate part of the ceremonial ambience-are absolutely confusing to listen to. There's so much going on during this disc that it leaves your head spinning with sounds you never imagined, much less heard before. That's the charm-and the frustration-of such an all-encompassing project.

The sound is much cleaner than other field music albums. However, because the music was not the focus of these films, the original recordings were captured mostly in mono. Also, few of the performances are presented in their entirety—many fade out a

minute or two after they begin, merging into other songs from the same culture.

Hermeto Pascoal: Only If You Don't Want It, You Can't Do It

Intuition CDP 90559 (AAD, 1987, 72:36) PERFORMANCE: 9 SOUND: 9

Hermeto Pascoal: Lagoa DaCanoa Happy Hour HH5005-2 (ADD, 1984, 41:33) PERFORMANCE: 8 SOUND: 7

Hermeto Pascoal is a multi-instrumentalist with more versatility than most, a composer with a flare for the offbeat, a musical wildman. He's also acted as a father figure for such Brazilian jazz artists as Flora Purim, Airto Moreira, Milton Nascimento, and others now making an impact on the American jazz scene. You may have heard him—even if you haven't heard of him—on albums by Antonio Carlos Jobim, Purim, and Miles Davis. Now it's time to hear Pascoal on his own terms.

With a title that's a bit confusing in its American translation, Only If You Don't Want It, You Can't Do It makes sense when you get a feel for the ground he covers with his unschooled, uninhibited approach to music. His energy is boundless, as is his imagination and his ability to play everything from acoustic piano, accordion, flute, and fluegelhorn to a wide variety of percussion instruments and found objects (such as shoes and bottles). He also surrounds himself with fine players and vocalists who bring the spirit of Brazilian jazz and folk music to life with some interesting twists. Sivana Malta's vocals on several cuts will remind you of Purim's supple voice. If you're a fan of that sound, you'll probably relish Pascoal's vision as well. The composer also goes down unexpected alleys, harnessing thick, fervidly played woodwind exclamations and piano tone clusters in the "Suite Mudo Grande." One cut later, his gentle fluegelhorn solo croons to the accompaniment of smooth, big-band-styled arrangements.

If you want to hear Pascoal in an earlier, more experimental context, check out Happy Hour's disc, Lagoa DaCanoa. It's not as slick as the Intuition release, but it does have its moments. Take, for instance, the Brazilian jazz tour de force "Papagaio Alegre," with its restless and gritty tenor sax solos, suave and happy flute solos, and the unmistakably authentic, rhythmic squawkings of a parrot. Some of the tunes are brilliant combinations of diverse musical-and nonmusical-elements; others are touching in their melodic simplicity; still others are daring but not quite as successful. Some of Pascoal's musical experiments with spoken word and music, in fact, lead to distorted sound that can be grating if you're not in the mood for it.

R E V I E W S



Ottmar Liebert: Nouveau Flamenco Higher Octave HOMCD 7026 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 50:31

Ottmar Liebert is steeped in the fiery tradition of flamenco. Listening to his new release, you'd never guess that the San Franciscobased guitarist was born in Germany to a Chinese-German father and a Hungarian mother. The classically trained artist spent much of his childhood traveling throughout Europe and Asia. He must have found his heart and his musical soul in Spain, for *Nouveau Flamenco* pulses with a deep appreciation of this tempestuous art form.

Liebert performs 13 originals with the responsive support of bass player Jon Gagan, percussionist Jeff Sussmann, and keyboardist Stefan Liebert. The talented soloist also accompanies himself through the magic of overdubbing, often creating the illusion of a guitar ensemble rivaling that of the Gipsy Kings. Liebert's approach, however, is much more subdued than the famous French flamenco band. The sense of primal energy the Gipsy Kings wield with such power and finesse isn't a part of his vocabulary. Yet this well-traveled young guitarist possesses a flair for the music that is entirely his own. It's clean and refined, warm and approachable.

As a composer, Liebert excels at stirring melodies and virtuosic guitar embellishments that enhance the emotional import of his themes. His pieces also develop quite nicely, only to dwindle away at the end. His finely wrought ideas almost always culminate in a simple studio fade-out when they could have reached a satisfying conclusion. This is an incessant weakness in Liebert's presentation; his resonant guitar deserves to reverberate into silence, at least once in a while.

The disc also loses steam toward the end as keyboards become more prominent and the guitar becomes more introspective, floating further away from the flamenco feeling. This will undoubtedly be a pleasant turn of events for some listeners, as Liebert waxes lyrical over softly humming synthesizer textures. But the guitarist is most impressive when he balances sentimentality with the sense of passion and yearning he captures in his more upbeat, flamenco-influenced selections.

The sound is striking. The engineers took a natural approach to miking and mixing Liebert's guitar, rejecting the common ten-

dency to liven things up with too much reverb. The other instruments also feel right for the most part, although the background chords of the keyboards seem a little too prominent at times.

—Linda Kohanov



Brian Mann: Cafe du Soleil Narada ND-63012 (AAD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 44:16

Like many keyboardists who have been tempted by technology, Brian Mann is rediscovering the simplicity and warmth of acoustic instruments. But while most of his peers sit down at grand pianos, this former session player—best known for his work with Kenny Loggins and Larry Carlton—straps on an accordion for his uplifting debut disc, Cafe du Saleil.

A refreshing collection of melodic instrumentals that range from new age to New Orleans, Cafe du Soleil joins violinist Doug Cameron's Mil Amores and veteran folk group Trapezoid's Moon Run as one of Narada's boldest and most successful attempts to shed its mellow, meditative image. More important, it achieves the difficult balance of acoustic and electronic music by merging synthesizers and drum machines with an unlikely but compelling lead instrument.

In Mann's talented hands, the accordion evokes moods of melancholy and joy, communicating an intimate sense of fragility that will surprise anyone who mistakenly thinks the often-insulted instrument is limited to energetic zydeco shuffles and hokey easy listening tunes. From the festive swing of "Dab in Da Mida" to such breezy, richly textured numbers as "Reclining Civilization" and "Je t'aime," Mann demonstrates the accordion's ability to fit into virtually any musical setting and maintain its presence, even when flanked by cellos, bassoons, clarinets, guitars, dobros, and horns.

Mann also uses this album to demonstrate his keyboard prowess. "What Has to Be" benefits from his contemporary jazz roots, but his use of synthesized—rather than real—acoustic guitars on "We're a Family" robs this lovely ballad of some its poignancy. Aside from brief lapses into progressive-rock excess ("Day by Day by Day") and atmospheric meandering ("Spirit"), Cafe du Soleil establishes Mann as a promising solo artist and makes playing the accordion seem more hip than square.

—David Okamoto

5 PERFORMANCE 7 SOUND QUALITY

David Schnaufer: Dulcimer Player Deluxe S.F.L. Discs #3 (AAD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 72:00

Dulcimer Player Deluxe lives up to its title, at least in terms of showcasing David Schnaufer's prodigious talent on the Appalachian folk instrument. He extracts myriad styles and techniques, sometimes sounding like a guitarist, at others like a banjo player, and occasionally like a super-stringed hybrid.

Unfortunately, Schnaufer has little artistic direction to channel his talents. He's taken a grab-bag approach, playing everything from George Harrison's "Here Comes the Sun" and Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky" to Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." His own compositions merely ape these styles.

The result is an album that becomes numbing over the course of 72 minutes, even with the occasional help of fiddle player Mark O'Connor and other musicians. By the time you get to track 17, a gentle ballad called "When Silence Was Golden," or track 21, an elegant folk piece called "Starry Lullaby," both originals, they barely register.

-John Diliberto

6 PERFORMANCE 8 SOUND QUALITY

Sensitive Heart: Heart Life Only New Age Music SH 10201 (AAD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 42:46

It's often more convenient and wittier to denigrate new age music rather than confront it on its own terms. Unfortunately, recordings like *Heart Life* make that tack all too easy to take. The disc shouts its new age intentions like a sophomoric convert to mysticism who's digested Siddhartha Gautama and Carlos Castenada in one sitting.

The liner notes are so elliptically loony it's even hard to tell who actually made this disc. After all, Sensitive Heart—a trademarked name—was "born...a musical Being created to uplift our private inner space." Even so, Doug Thomas is credited for composing, arranging, and performing the music, though "Concept & Production through Aaron Hall" is in bold type with double the point size.

Whoever's responsible, *Heart Life* is a simple melodic album, full of easy sequencer ostinatos and arpeggio-based melodies that have become the formula of pop/new age/synthesizer music. On such tracks as "Fresh Beginning" and "Nurturing Youth at the Fountain," Sensitive Heart orchestrates a gentle, lyrical flow that suggests the easy melodicism of Ray Lynch and the quasi-classical sweep of Yanni without yielding to the mechanics of the former or the bombast of the latter.

But other tracks wear their sentimentality on their synthesizers, notably the George Winston-inspired "Tears of Joy" and the title track. It's all carefully placed on an immaculate sound floor, with lots of space and sparing use of ambience. The disc also employs something called "Coherence Technology," which is credited with "neutralizing fundamental levels of interference." Uh-huh.

-John Diliberto

NEWAGE



William Eaton: Tracks We Leave Canyon CR-7008 (DDD) 1989 (89) Disc time: 55:52

This disc has it all: melodic, beautifully crafted compositions that are both intellectually and emotionally satisfying. Between the gorgeous tone of William Eaton's stringed instruments (which he designed and constructed), the splendid collaborative contributions with other prominent new age musicians, and the CD's superb fidelity, *Tracks We Leave* is a feast for the ears.

The landscape and people of the American southwest inspired this recording, and the songs reflect the desert's spaciousness and magical austerity. The compositions evoke haunting Native American timelessness ("Blue Mountain Blue Sky") and sultry desert-city imagery ("Tuba City Lights"). Eaton even stylizes an Irish jig ("Desert Shamrock") to suit his purpose. His solos on

harp guitar ("Jupiter and Sage") and sevenstring guitar ("Muley Point Promise") showcase his unique instruments' superb tone and attest to his eloquence and precision. Billowing waves of lyre in "Jasabah" suggest the music of dreams—but with a substance and direction you won't hear in most space music.

Eaton's pairing of his instruments with accompanists is particularly striking. His haunting lyre and R. Carlos Nakai's flute create earthy, sacred themes in "White Mesa Black Mesa" and "Blue Mountain Blue Sky." Arvel Bird's violin and Eaton's home-made o'ele'n strings complement each other in a folky key in "Feather Mask." The lush tones of Eaton's synth guitar color the background of Claudia Tulip's flute in "Edge of the Cedars" and "Evergreen," and he guides the guitar's resonance into tasteful synthesizer realms in another Bird collaboration, "Shadow Gypsies."

-Richard Price

9 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

Ben Tavera King: Coyote Moon Global Pacific R2 79331 (AAD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 49:02

A lot of albums have come out of the desert Southwest in the last year or so, from the synthesizer excursions of Tim Clark and Steve Roach to the flutes of R. Carlos Nakai. With its Spanish and Indian heritage, the austere, often alien-looking landscape inspires feelings of being in another time and place.

Acoustic guitarist Ben Tavera King has been exploring this world since his first album, Saturday Night in San Antonio. Over the years, his sound has become more refined, the production more polished, and the compositions

more cinematic. You can see the arid landscapes rolling by on *Coyote Moon*, rising out of the heat mirages of the intense sun, trailing into the blue opalescence of dusk, and occasionally warmed by the glow of a smoke-filled cantina at desert's edge.

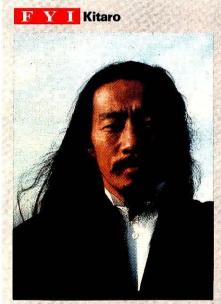
King conveys both the vistas and the musical past of the area without resorting to clichés. "100 Year Rain" uses multitracked guitars and a drone to evoke storm clouds riding in from the distance. Its intricate guitars and subtle synthesizer colors paint an ominous portrait.

He alternates these more impressionistic pieces with music drawn from the dance halls and cantinas. "El Kabong's Fiesta" is a rousing dance with a mariachi rhythm that recalls "La Bamba." "Ramona's Ritual Rhumba" takes a more urban, jazz approach with saxophonist David Travers blowing soul licks across King's guitar picking.

Although he walks through the desert, King's view includes the sounds of India, Persia, and Asia. "Rainbow Man" is fueled by Indian tablas. The title track takes on an Arabic air with dumbek percussion, and King's loose phrasing recalls the oud, a Persian stringed instrument. The CD closer, "Maidens of the Flute Clan," alternates between a Native American tribal flute echoing in the distance and King's fretless classical guitar, plucked to sound like a Japanese koto.

On Coyote Moon, he creates a delicate balance, drawing from his own Hispanic traditions while effortlessly making aural connections with cultures from around the world. This is global music marked by the undeniable stamp of King's own cultural identity.

-John Diliberto



"Kitaro is a very spiritual person, but he's also Joe six-pack," claims John Villanueva, road manager for the new age pioneer for the last three years. That's a most unorthodox portrayal of Masanori Takahashi, who his high school friends called Kitaro, "Man of love and peace."

The images of mysticism and heightened spirituality that surround the man are the result of his music, which seems to arrive like a message from the stars. From his 1978 album, *Ten-Kai: Astral Trip*, to his first official U.S. album, *Tenku* (1986), Kitaro has woven simple, tuneful melodies among a web of synthesizer textures, Japanese percussion, and acoustic and electric guitars.

With Kojiki (Geffen 24255-2), he makes his first major stylistic departure in five years. Even his last recording, The Light of the Spirit, was a lush wash of synthesizer orchestrations with acoustic colors. But Kojiki boasts a full 32-piece string orchestra replacing Kitaro's usual synthesizer strings. "When I was composing the music for Kojiki, I was playing the whole thing, including the string section, on synthesizer," he explains in his hesitant, broken English. "But after a while I thought the synthesizers had a cold feeling." He enlisted the help of an arranger and transferred his synth lines to an orchestra. "The sound is getting warmer, more human," he smiles. You would think this would be quite an epiphany for someone who has spent the last 15 years playing synthesizers.

Kojiki, based on the Japanese creation myths contained in the book of the same name, is Kitaro's most programmatic recording to date. He excerpted a few stories and tailored them to his music, from the creation of time on "Hajimari" to fights with dragons on "Orochi" and death vigils on "Koi." Those who have typecast Kitaro as nothing more than a creator of meditation music should experience the orchestral waves of crescendos on "Orichi," or the triumphant charging percussion of "Matsuri."

Kitaro has always seen his music in "mental pictures." On Kojiki, he visualized them as a film. "The feeling is like a movie and the scene is changing and the feeling is changing, getting deeper," he says. "So I made up my own stories based on the Kojiki stories. But my story is my picture of the scene, with my own edits."

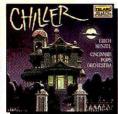
Despite the Hollywood-like overtures he wrote for the strings on his new release, Kitaro's music remains essentially simple and direct. "I think my harmonies are ordinary," he confesses, "because normal sounds are beautiful, not avant-garde. I want to play more like the flow of a river, just go through straight and smooth. I like more beautiful things."

-John Diliberto

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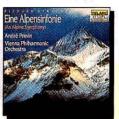
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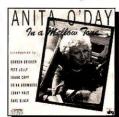
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Miss Saigon

Original London Cast Recording Geffen 24271-2 (DDD) 1989 (90) Disc time: 106:18 (2 discs)

Having experienced Miss Saigon live at London's Drury Lane Theatre Royal in January, I was more than ecstatic when the show was released on CD in February. When I say "experienced," I mean "experienced" because Miss Saigon is unlike any musical you've ever tried. Sure, you don't see helicopters, Cadillacs, and 200-foot statues of Ho Chi Minh descending on stage in an average production, but even the glitzy Starlight Express boasted some pretty nifty props. The beauty, strength, and potency of Miss Saigon, however, lie in its aural rather than visual

Throughout the 1980s, musical theater witnessed an astonishing transformation as an unconventional kind of through-composed (no-dialogue) musical opera emerged, with London serving as its berth. The success of this new-look musical form seems endless-Phantom of the Opera and Les Miserables, for example. But no matter how "new" they may have been, in dealing with 19th century subject, these shows failed to truly impact modern society. Miss Saigon, on the other hand, pulls at the political heartstring of contempory life.

Many will argue that Miss Saigon is a revamped Madama Butterfly. True, there are similarities, but it's the dissimilarities between the two that mark their difference. Where Puccini's fictional masterpiece originated as a magazine story of two war-torn lovers, lyricist Alain Boubil relocates this grim tale amid the ultimate nightmare of contemporary U.S. history-namely, the Vietnam conflict. As a result, the intimacy of Boubil's lyrics combined with the severity of the musical atmosphere creates a plot that's all too genuine.

Just as Puccini's Butterfly incorporated modern touches of harmony, so too does Claude-Michel Schonberg's score. In many ways a musical opera, Schonberg's music fuses upbeat, modern rhythms with rich and varied harmonies and timbres while scattering ethnic overtones throughout. The result: a sound that is both intense, local, and mesmerizing.

His vocals, too, are not overly operatic, but persistently full of vibrancy and color.

You won't hear any trained diva la-la here. The vocalists are natural; they sing straight from the soul; their performances are very

Miss Saigon is not a star-making vehicle; it's a staged political statement set to music. You won't leave the theater (or your living room) humming a particular melody, for it's the impact of the unified ensemble that succeeds here. In recapturing this "experience" on CD, very little-if anything-of the live production is lost. It's the musical itself that makes this show such an indelible experi--Mary-Kate Bourn

7 PERFORMANCE 10 SOUND QUALITY

Gypsy Original Broadway Cast Elektra Nonesuch 79239-2 (DDD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 54:24

If for no other reason, Tyne Daly earned her well-deserved 1990 Tony Award just for the audacity of taking on the role of Mama Rose, the ferociously driven stage mother in Gypsy. Despite the fact that Daly had never before appeared in a major musical, she triumphed in a role made legendary by Ethel Merman and Angela Lansbury. Critics and audiences alike were bowled over by the sheer forcefulness of her acting, and now Daly has made another debut: her first original cast recording

What Daly brings to Gypsy is a new, almost sympathetic portrayal of Rose that gives us a glimpse of the woman inside the monster. What Daly lacks is a singing voice to compare with Lansbury or Merman (has anyone ever had a voice like Merman's?). Consequently, it's the quieter songs that provide Daly with her finest moments. Her tender renditions of "Small World" and "You'll Never Get Away from Me" are lovely. But she sounds tentative in "Some People," which is especially fatal for the driving rhythms of that song, and her version of "Everything's Coming Up Roses" is merely serviceable. "Rose's Turn," the tour de force mad scene at the climax of the show, requires more acting than singing, and fortunately Daly is able to carry it off.

The character of Rose dominates any version of Gypsy, but Jonathan Hadary almost steals this recording in the role of Herbie, the mild-mannered agent who loves, and finally leaves, Rose. Composers Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim have wisely added several new harmonies in the songs to take advantage of Hadary's singing voice. As the gawky girl who will become the famous stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, Crista Moore is sweet and poignant in "Little Lamb," although she lacks some of the sassiness needed to carry off her striptease version of "Let Me Entertain You." As always, the raucous song of advice from three aging strippers, "You Gotta Have a Gimmick," is delightful.

This is the most extensive recording of Gypsy, with bits of lead-in dialogue for many of the songs (especially effective for conveying the chilling use of "Everything's Coming Up Roses"). The stunning overture and orchestral sounds throughout the score have never been better, and there's a gorgeous frontrow ambience to the entire recording. The Merman and Lansbury versions have the edge in singing, but sonically this is the best Gypsy -Steve Korté

6 PERFORMANCE 9 SOUND QUALITY

Jekyll and Hyde RCA 60416-2-RC (DDD) 1990 (90) Disc time: 51:30

Now that Phantom of the Opera has minted millions for Andrew Lloyd Webber, was there ever any doubt that Robert Louis Stevenson's even more famous Victorian tale of a mad doctor would also be musicalized? Just as Jesus Christ Superstar and Chess began life as recordings, Jekyll and Hyde makes its debut with this disc of highlights from the score. Since this recording, the show has received its world premiere in Houston, TX, and there are plans to tour it throughout the country.

With its elements of romance and horror, Jekyll and Hyde would seem to be a natural for the musical stage. Songwriters Frank Wildhorn and Leslie Bricusse certainly have a varied background; lyricist Bricusse has written several show scores and numerous hit songs (including "Goldfinger" and "The Candy Man'') and Wildhorn composed "Where Do Broken Hearts Go" for Whitney Houston and "I Do" for Natalie Cole. For the starring role on this recording, they have enlisted Colm Wilkinson, the superb Irish tenor who originated the role of Jean Valjean in Les Miserables in London and on Broadway. Newcomer Linda Eder, who created a sensation with her appearances on television's Star Search, sings two roles here: Jekyll's fiancee Lisa and a London prostitute named Lucy.

Despite all these talented people, it has to be said that Jekyll and Hyde never comes together as an exciting theater score. Far too many of the songs suffer from a generic romantic blandness, and the trite, Hallmark card lyrics are a distinct letdown. The song titles alone seem interchangeable: "Love Has Come of Age," "Once Upon a Dream," and "Till You Came into My Life" all sound as if they were written to be enormous pop hits for Johnny Mathis or Barbra Streisand. Perhaps the composers were trying to write songs that could find a life outside the show; whatever, they have gutted the score of theatricality.

That said, the performers on this disc are terrific. Wilkinson is one of the most remarkable singers in musical theater today, and he does a wonderful job here. He doesn't really make much of a distinction between his Jekyll and Hyde voices, but his singing is so strong that it doesn't matter. Eder has a powerful soprano voice that's going to earn her lots of comparisons to Streisand, but in some ways her voice is even richer than Streisand's. It's a stunning debut, and it's fun to hear her and Wilkinson trying to out-do each other on some of the big love ballads. The orchestral sound on this disc is first-rate.

By the way, it's a small point, but somewhere in the CD booklet, couldn't the original author of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde receive at least one tiny mention? -Steve Korté

READERS' FORUM

Castigating Conrad

After reading the "Definitive Jazz CD Library" by Thomas Conrad (April 1990), I wondered if another Basic 50 for jazz would be forthcoming. The 49 selections picked had to be for people as old as the artists (but alive). He totally missed artists like Jean-Luc Ponty, Kenny G, David Sanborn, Spyro Gyra, Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, Al DiMeola, Lee Ritenour, Stanley Clarke, Stanley Jordan, Dave Grusin, Yellowjackets, Grover Washington Jr., Larry Carlton...

The list could go on and on. What about younger jazz lovers? A jazz article for the '90s should include all jazz, not a small section of it.

Anthony DePaul Rochester, NY

When T.S. Eliot wrote about "that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest," it was just another way of saying that to include Kenny G in a Definitive Jazz Library would be like including Danielle Steele in a list of great books of the Western World.

-Thomas Conrad

Beatles Banter

Why has no one noticed that the Beatles' songs "It's Only Love" and "I've Just Seen a Face" from the U.S. LP release Rubber Soul have never appeared on any domestic CD release? I've known this for nearly two years now!

Kevin J. Dolan Monroeville, PA

Nyah, Nyah—we've known for three years! We quote now from a review of Rubber Soul in our Compact Disc Yearbook 1988: "Anyone who's used to the U.S. LP version of Rubber Soul should be warned that the British release doesn't include 'It's Only Love' and 'I've Just Seen a Face.'" Our reviewer and resident Beatles expert (Larry Canale) goes on to state that both songs appear on Help! Take that!

New Age Nitpicking

Linda Kohanov's unprofessionalism oversteps the bounds of responsible journalism in a review of our album *Intimate Voyage* (August 1990, p. 78) that does not

seek to inform its readers but rather showcase Kohanov's trashing skills. Hers is not a 7/7 review with some unfavorable opinions, but rather a musical character assassination replete with inaccuracies and misrepresentations. She has the misconception that our music was written to liner note specifications. As stated, our intent was to "translate our feelings into music" as personal responses to this unique area [Arizona]. Never was there any intent to leave our urban musical sensibilities behind. The album was billed from the start as a combination of 'pop, rock, jazz, and classical styles." We find it quite ironic to be damned for such musical effrontery as "hot rhythmic drives and catchy melodic hooks"! Assuming that to be derogatory, there are only six uptempo tunes out of 16 cuts! How insensitive we were to portray feelings that ranged from cool and contemplative (most of the tunes not mentioned in the review) to hot and moving!

Kohanov further berates our music by painting us as nightclub musicians flipping switches on our synths. (She must frequent



Various Artists: Rock, Rhythm & Blues (Warner Bros. 25817-2) 10/9: This is an A-plus excellent compilation of the title material. Best two tracks are by Michael McDonald and Howard Hewett, respectively. A must-have for '50s R&B appreciators.

John Doe Harrisburg, PA

Stravinsky: The Soldier's Tale (Pangea/IRS PAND-6233) 10/7: This Stravinsky is interesting—the London Sinfonietta with Vanessa Redgrave as the Devil, Sting as the Soldier, and Ian McKellen narrating. A wonderful performance for Stravinsky fans.

Kat Callaway McAllen, TX

Victor Bailey: Bottoms Up (Atlantic 81978-2) 9/9: Superb talent from [bassist] Bailey—including what he plays, who he plays with, and how great it all sounds!

John C. Correale Philadelphia, PA

Fleetwood Mac: *Then Play On* (Reprise 6368-2) 9/7: This is one of the best albums of the late-'60s British blues/rock movement, yet it still remains unknown. Featuring Peter Green's classics "Oh Well"

and "Rattlesnake Shake," the album highlights the dueling triple lead guitar of Jeremy Spencer, Green, and the newly added Danny Kirwan.

Steven Silverstein Pikesville, MD

Alannah Myles: Alannah Myles (Atlantic 81956-2) 9/8: This lady can sing! Clear and clean, crisp highs and thunderous bass.

Robert G. Thompson Oshkosh, WI

Peter Murphy: Deep (RCA 9877-2-H) 8/8: The David Bowie comparisons are inevitable when you listen to Peter Murphy's new album—more so when you see the video for "Cuts You Up." But Murphy's songs still have some of that postpunk gloominess his work with Bauhaus possessed. Deep is also his most mature music yet.

Bill Merrill Omaha, NE

Michael Stearns: Encounter (Hearts of Space HS11008-2) 10/8: An often awe-inspiring, often exquisitely haunting album concerning the timeless longing for a meeting, or "encounter," with extraterrestrial beings. Definitely his greatest

score to date and an album that could very easily become a classic. The assistance he received from the brilliant synthesist Steve Roach must have helped tremendously.

> David Rush Baton Rouge, LA

Monteverdi: L'Incoronazione di Poppea (Virgin 90775-2) 4/10: This recording endeavors to be so true to Monteverdi it should have "no artificial ingredients" stamped on the box. It is an opera bludgeoned to death by scholarship. The orchestra is bare-bones minimum, the tempos so slow you wish the CD player had speed control.

David L. Kirk Wheaton, IL

Kenny G: Live (Arista ARCD-8613) 9/9: The G-man's magic is now captured for the first time on this double-length CD. This man plays with such beauty and grace; nothing comes close to his soloing on the 10-minute version of "Songbird." He also has Michael Bolton join him. If there's ever a CD that's worth the money, it's this one.

Joseph Mammone, Jr. Marshfield, MA

READERS' FORUM

some very different clubs if our album is typical of those she haunts.) Thin? Flat? Unmodified? Stock? She obviously equates our intent to use mostly digitally sampled (not synthesized) acoustic sounds (realized on a Kurzweil K250) and to limit the use of electronic gimmickry with "unsophistication."

Finally, we especially take offense to "boom boxes...drowning out any sensitivity to the uniqueness of the wilderness." Fortunately, more informed sources on sensitivity to the beauty of this area (such as the magazine *Arizona Highways* and even the governor of Arizona) have already endorsed the album.

Greg Zduniak & Mike Frassetti Phoenix, AZ

Linda Kohanov is a consummate professional. We stand behind her review.

Castigating Conrad: Take 2

I'm writing in regard to Thomas Conrad's review of one of our recordings, *No Prisoners* by the Fusionaires (September '89, p. 100). As I see it, Mr. Conrad doesn't have a clue as to what the Fusionaires are about or what our label is about. His review of that particular recording is moronic and insulting to everyone concerned.

Whatever happened to the idea that a review should inform readers about what it is that a particular artist is trying to do? Listing song titles and mentioning the word "dadaism" doesn't cut it. Anyway, the New York Mets are closer to dadaism than the Fusionaires are. After reading Conrad's jazz capsule critiques over the past months, I strongly believe he is totally unfamiliar with this genre of music. Does he know who Curlew is? Or Power Tools? Or Ronald Shannon Jackson? Does he know where the Knitting Factory is? Does he know where he is? Does he go to hear live music?

Some critics feel it's okay to say nothing and inform no one. "Buy this disc and the joke's on you" he says. Some joke. We play at the Knitting Factory in New York, we are playing at the Montreal Jazz Fest this year, and touring Europe this fall. Something is wrong here. Thomas Conrad dismisses us and everybody else takes us for what we are: serious musicians who play their asses off and pander to no one. And we have a good time doing it. And no one has ever called us "monotonous."

John McCracken President, Headstrong Records Guitarist, the Fusionaires

The advantage of a format like "Capsule Critiques" is that it allows for comments and recommendations on a greater number of CD releases than would otherwise be possible. This benefit is, of course, lost on McCracken, who would have, understandably, preferred silence to my remarks. On the subject of No Prisoners, perhaps the best compromise that we can reach is an agreement to disagree. I am sorry that he finds me an insulting moron. But I am gratified to learn that his band plays hard, does not pander, has fun, and gets occasional gigs. A small correction: At least one

person has indeed called him "monotonous."

—Thomas Conrad

Longbox Lathing

I commend CD Review's stand regarding wasteful, ecologically harmful packaging for CDs. One of the reasons put forward by NARM for the continued use of the 6x12 package is that of "security," This argument does not hold up under scrutiny. Walk into any music store, and what will you see? Rack upon rack of unpackaged cassettes. Shrink-wrapped, yes; boxed, generally not, except for multi-cassette sets. When you consider that the smaller cassette may be slipped into a shirt, jacket pocket, or handbag much more easily than a "naked" CD, you understand the degree of contempt NARM has for the consumer.

The only reason even approaching validity is that merchandisers do not want to invest in new display fixtures. This short-sighted, illogical attitude is very sad when one considers that the payback time for new racks would be very short, and greater stock/display area would be gained as well

John C. Lewis San Francisco, CA

I am an avid CD fan who detests those pesky 6x12 longboxes or the migraine-inducing blister packs. Sure, I've heard that retailers need the 6x12 format to keep from changing their record bin-type displays and to prevent theft. When I purchase a prerecorded tape (which is rare), my retailer removes a reusable 4x8-inch plastic shell put on the cassette to discourage theft. Could CD retailers do the same—put the jewel box into a reusable 6x12-inch plastic shell to fit in their converted record bins?

Stephen Burke Winnetka, IL

I am stationed with the U.S. Air Force in the country of the Netherlands. In Holland, you cannot find any music store that sells CDs in the longboxes. The Dutch do not want to be bothered by the space consuming packages, since their stores are generally smaller in size than the average American store.

The Dutch place an empty jewelbox with a small, white stick-on label that has the disc identification number (DIN) on the stock display. The actual CD is kept in a clear plastic sleeve with the same corresponding DIN label, on shelves or in cabinets behind the sales clerk. When someone wants to purchase the disc, the clerk checks the number, removes the disc from the shelf, puts it in the jewelbox, and gives it to the buyer.

Duke E. Hill APO New York, NY

I am 100-percent behind *CD Review* in the termination of the 6x12 longboxes used to house CDs. They are a complete waste!

You should congratulate the Christian record labels (Myrrh, Sparrow, Benson,

etc.) for discontinuing the longboxes 24 months ago. They are truly way ahead in this area. My local Christian bookstore has adopted the flip holder for the compact discs it sells.

The vast majority of the CDs I buy through mail order businesses are not packaged in longboxes. I'm personally boycotting shopping mall record stores. The longboxes must die!

John DeLaurentis Absecon, NJ

Recently I bought three CDs from Tower Records in New York City. I unwrapped them and asked the salesman to discard the longboxes and shrinkwrap. He refused, saying I was not allowed to open the stupid 6x12 box in the store. He then called the police because I demanded my money back and was told the CDs were now mine and that Tower Records does not allow CDs to be opened in the store. I eventually got my money back, and two of NY's finest told me off and warned me not to try it again. I probably won't try it again because of this harrowing experience, but I still agree with your policies.

Frank R. Clarke New York, NY

Do I detect a bit of hypocrisy here? I've carefully scanned the pages of CD Review in search of a disclaimer indicating that the magazine is printed on recycled paper. I've found none.

Dave Abrahams Milwaukee, WI

For the past several months, Wayne Green and CD Review have been rallying against the 6x12 longbox, saying it's useless and environmentally detrimental. You have a point. When the July issue of CDR arrived at my house recently, four blow-in cards fell to the ground as I pulled the magazine out of my mailbox. Is your magazine environmentally safe? It doesn't look that way.

I have a proposition for Wayne. I will agree to leave the 6x12 longbox at the store when I buy a CD if you agree to stop putting blow-in and bind-in cards in your publications (all of them, not just CD Review). C'mon Wayne, let's see you put your money where your mouth is. Show us you're not just a bandwagon jumper.

Joe Lynn Arlington Heights, IL

You aren't talking ecology, just putting me out of business! I agree the blow-in and bind-in cards are a royal pain. I hate 'em. But I'm not stupid either. The sorry fact of publishing life is that these cards increase the subscriptions for a magazine by several hundred percent. We'd soon be out of business without 'em. Now do you understand why every publisher is stuffing his magazine with cards? They work! Nothing else we've tried works nearly as well.

—Wayne

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		Baird, Colin Tilney,
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Briem, Hongen, A Harmonia Mundi		Vilhelm Furtwangler, WFE 357
J.S. Bach: Cantatas		La Chapelle ppe Herreweghe,
Barbara Schlick,	Gerard Lesne,	
Peter Harvey, Pe Bruckner: Mass in e Collegium Vocale	Min; Motets/L	a Chapelle Royale,
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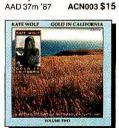
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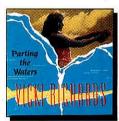
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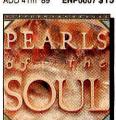
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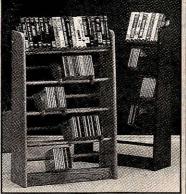
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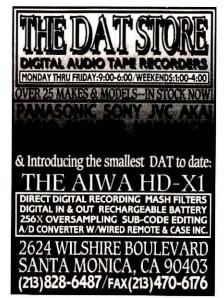


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Continued from p. 3

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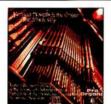
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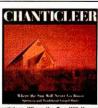


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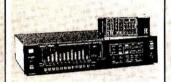
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Where Was Wayne?

BY WAYNE GREEN

here's so much going on around here I can't keep up with it. Like our June Astounding Sounds Caravan, which covered about 2000 miles going from New Hampshire to Chicago and back. The tour visited 38 hi-fi and record stores, giving away tons of goodies—like Telarc, DMP, and (sob) Greener Pastures CDs, Sony CD players, Canton speakers, T-shirts, and other stuff like that.

At some stops, where the participating stores did some serious promoting, the tour drew huge crowds. At others, where the stores dropped the ball, the dozens of *CD Review* readers who read our tour ad won all the prizes. The tour bus was set up with the latest in Digital Sound Processing (DSP) Sony gear. This was the first time thousands of people had ever heard DSP, which has to be heard to be believed.

The CD Review tour crew came back saying the big question was, where's Wayne? Well, I was in Nashville for the National Association of Independent Record Distributors (NAIRD) conference, then in Chicago for the Summer Consumers Electronics Show (CES), then to Sedalia (MO) for the tenth Ragtime Festival, and finally in Dallas for a ham radio convention. Oh, the aggravations I endure serving you. And what thanks do I get?

I grovel for the hardware people at CES, since the more hi-fi equipment we can get advertised in CD Review, the bigger magazine you'll have to read. Then some aspic-brained reader tells me to leave the hardware to (ugh!) Stereo Review. You don't really believe one word those LP-suckers write, do you?

About the only CES news was that Sony is finally breaking the DAT logjam—so we'll soon be seeing DAT recorders, many under \$1000 too. They'll be equipped with chips to prevent you from making copies of copies of CDs. Yep, you'll be able to copy your CDs onto tape (which isn't cheap!), but not make second generation copies. Big deal. I wonder how long it'll be before some techno-reader sends us an article on a fast fix to bypass this stupid chip.

I've had DAT recorders for a couple years now and haven't felt any need to record a CD yet. I'm so used to my CD player's instant track selection that waiting for a tape to fast forward, fast as it is, takes too long. How easily we get spoiled.

900

Have you tried our 900-CD-GUILT number yet? We've been sending out ridiculously expensive prizes for the best recorded calls commenting on my editorials. It's also a way to check out some new music CDs from Music/NH. Give us a call the next time you're visiting a friend.

Green Marker Madness

A recent article in *Stereopile*, explaining what a fantastic difference in sound green-inking the edges of a CD makes, drove me to my lab to check this out. It took me no time at all to isolate the active element causing this effect. One only has to have a good firm understanding of digital opto-electronics and data storage. I've been at this digital stuff for more than 40 years now; in fact, I wrote some of the early books on digital communications.



Okay, what I needed was a very heavy element—something substantially beyond U-235, if possible. The massive heavy element molecules would be sucked into the CD edges by capillary attraction, sealing them and effectively eliminating laser beam bit-bounce.

Utopium, first described by Einstein 18 years before it was isolated, looked pretty good, but it was too radioactive for safe handling. How about its second isotope, Balonium (B-360), with a half life of one week? In two weeks, a whole life, it'd be entirely safe—even for kids.

I tried it and the results were absolutely incredible. Gone were all those harsh, edgy laser-highs that LP fanatics have been hating. Instead I found the sound staging to be beyond belief. Bass was deep and throaty. Strings were shimmering in their focus. Astounding!

I also found that even a short treatment in this colorless, odorless heavy gas solved other nagging CD ills such as bit-migration. By sealing the CD edges with great big molecules, it prevented dreaded bit-rot. It also stabilized the CDs, eliminating bit-flutter totally. It even provided a protective layer against cosmic ray penetration and the resulting bit-reversals.

You know those little pinholes that you

can see in poorly made CDs, little holes that can overwork your error-correcting circuits? Well, these apparently are filled by these large molecules, eliminating that annoying bit-indecision sort of rumble that is so disrupting, particularly in the quieter musical passages.

I get some CDs that are so full of pinholes I have to try them on two or three different players before they'll play. (That's another good reason to be insistent about eliminating longboxes; you can't open them to check for pinholes.)

I hope to have Balonium in all your local record stores before Christmas. What a great present for any really serious golden ear audiophile! This is a quantum leap in molecular digital technology. No more green markers. No more ArmorAll sauce.

Are you having problems with your floppies? Dip 'em in Balonium and watch your data transfer faster than ever before. Laser discs provide brighter, clearer pictures—almost like HDTV.

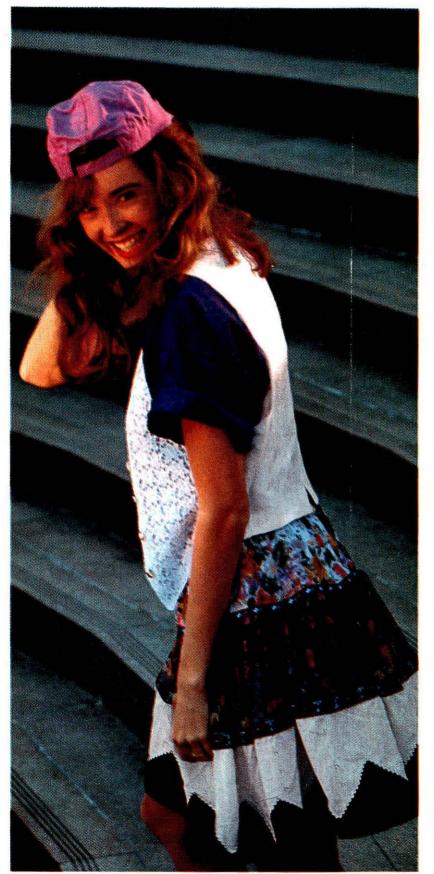
Tests with razor blades show that they tend to last up to 10 times as long if occasionally dipped in Balonium. Watches will often keep better time. Some watches that haven't worked for years suddenly came to life.

I'll be looking for testimonials from you on your experiences with B-360, the all-around magical gas. If you get as excited about this as I am, you may be interested in a brochure on a new Balonium mine stock.

Those Almost FREE Samplers

Yes, we raised the price to \$3.49 for shipping and handling. You want to know why? Because we were having 10,000 of 'em made and your greed for a good deal ran the orders up to around 20,000. The extra 49 cents covers our back-ordering or refunding orders from slower-witted or indecisive readers who wait too long for the bandwagon and then complain. You keep that up and we'll go to \$4.

Now that the Almost FREE Sampler is an institution, why not be first in line with a subscription and not have to put up with us running out of 'em? Tell you what, for a crummy \$34.99-no, make that \$35...let's go full bore with this-yes, for \$35 we'll send you an almost FREE CD every month for a year. Three years for \$100-but only for the first thousand who subscribe. Procrastinate and you've screwed up again. Send your \$100 checks to: Unbridled Greed, CD Review, Forest Rd., Hancock, NH 03449-0278. We'll send you three years of Adventures in Music almost FREE samplers. Such a deal! Yes, you can call it in on 1-800-227-1053 with a credit card number. ■



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The Sound of Quality

Introducing a novel concept in three-piece satellite systems.

To give you some idea of the bass output you can expect from most compact satellite systems, we'd like you to listen to something you already own.

A clock radio. Because, quite frankly, while these satellite systems may be "marvels of space efficiency," they have very little bass efficiency.

In response to this, the engineers at Cerwin-Vega have designed a satellite system

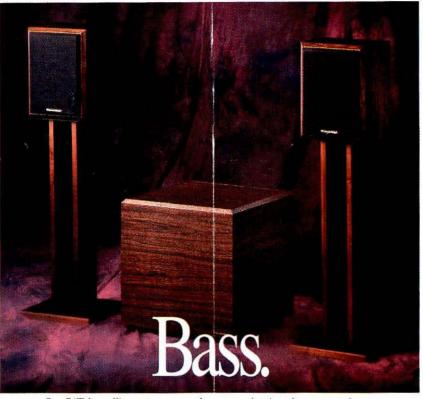
with a subwoofer that takes bass

response all the way down to 30 Hertz. Sowhile you may not be able to see our suf Our 10" woofer gives

new meaning to the term woofer (it : "low performance." still small enough to hide), you 'hear it feel it. Now, it's only f show you our competitor's low nequency specifications exactly as

they're published. So, here they are:

Amazing, isn't it? What do they



Our SAT-6 satellite system can make a room the size of, say, an outhouse, sound very much like an opera house.

think, that because the subwoofer is meant to be hidden, the specs should be hidden as well?

At Cerwin-Vega, we're proud, no, we're gushing over our SAT-6.

Not only A CRITIC'S RESPONSE is it quite TO OUR BASS RESPONSE. compact, "When I fired up the SAT-6 system, and what sound! Good grief. Wide range, clean, it's one of smooth, and powerful . . . superlative sounding on rock, of course . On Mozart, the Cerwin-Vega SAT-6's sound was delicate, the best sounding light, accurate, and spacious. This was one speaker system I kept in place for a while, for daily listening in place of my usual loudspeakers." systems we've ever

made. If you'd like us to be more specific, we've got nothing to hide.

- David Moran, CD Review

With sensitivity measured at 95 decibels, the SAT-6 can play

very loud on very little power.

If you appreciate a good high, the dome tweeters in our satellite speakers can take your music clear up to 20,000 Hertz.

What's more, at 6½," our mid-range speakers are the same size as the woofers in the Bose AM-5.®

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For rock and roll.

Before we get to the finish, let's talk about the finish. Unlike most systems, where the subwoofer comes "nude," and is meant to be hidden, the SAT-6 is finely crafted and detailed for public viewing.

So, if you're at all intrigued by this, we suggest you take this simple bass test. And listen.

♥ Cerwin-Vega!

Cerwin-Vega: 555 East Easy Street, Simi Valley, CA 93065 805-584-9332 Cerwin-Vega/Canada: 2360 Midland Avenue, Unit 21, Scarborough, Ontario M1S 4A9 Cerwin-Vega/ Europe: Grynderupvej 12, P.O. Box 40, DK-9610 Norager, Denmark By the way, the satellite stands shown in the photo are not included in the standard SAT-6 system.